

# FORUM

**for the discussion of new trends in education**

Summer 1985

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**This issue**

**Central Control of the Curriculum?**

**Whole School Policies**

**New Tertiary Systems**

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## The Next Forum

Jackson Hall, President of the Society of Education Officers, writes on the government's centralising thrust from the angle of local government. Richard Pring contributes a study of the movement to pre-vocational courses, assessing their advantages and disadvantages. Michael Armstrong considers the recent DES papers on primary education, as well as the Thomas (ILEA) and the recent Welsh report. Articles on teachers' groups (Jose Levine), personal and social development (Michael Small) and on curriculum debate across the whole school (John Hull) follow up earlier **Forum** interests.

# Managing Teachers

The present government is putting a lot of emphasis on effective school management. But what kind of a mess is it making of the primary responsibility it is arrogating to itself — that of managing the profession as a whole? It would be necessary to go back a long way to find a period when the teaching profession felt so alienated from the powers that be, so closely under attack, so little appreciated.

During the week in which this editorial is being written the examples have been legion. The confusion over teachers' pay has now reached a new low; where does the responsibility lie? With the local authorities or with Keith Joseph whose dark remarks (for instance about merit pay) seem uttered apparently at random. Lady Warnock claims that disillusion with what goes on in schools is general, including for good measure a gratuitous attack on London teachers for biased political education. Lord Hailsham (an ex-Minister by the way) used the opportunity of the Edward Boyle Memorial lecture to slate the schools for producing what he defined as a 'moral desert'. Warming to his brief he described the 'elimination' of the grammar schools as an 'educational disaster' — a sentiment which must surely have made Boyle himself, a supporter and facilitator of comprehensive reorganisation, turn in his grave. Joseph's White Paper goes out of its way to accuse the teachers of poor planning, lack of rigour and 'inadequate knowledge and understanding'.

And so one could go on. Invective against the school system from the right has reached new heights. No account is taken of the very clear success of the system in maintaining morale and providing worthwhile objectives for millions of children who today are faced with the bleakest of futures due to the policy of de-industrialisation and deliberate creation of unemployment on a scale never before experienced in this country.

Those responsible for managing the teaching profession on a national scale need to take these things into account. A great deal of creative thinking is going on in the schools, in spite of the unrewarding circumstances in which they exist. Both Richard Nicholson and Brian Boyd, heads of comprehensive schools, tackle fundamental issues relating to the curriculum and to school management as a whole. Both articles are based on long experience and infused with a positive, democratic outlook, particularly on the importance of full participation by staff and others in charting the way forward.

But 'participation' hardly seems to enter into Keith Joseph's vocabulary, as Nanette Whitbread, David Webb and Harvey Wyatt make clear in their articles focusing on the centralising thrust across the whole field of education. This has recently been taken several steps further by Joseph in his arrogation of control over

much of the in-service activities of local authorities. Further, the articles by John Anderson and Annie Johnson on a Bradford tertiary system, and by Martin Kerrison on a Leicestershire 'cluster' again report what are surely highly positive developments for the 16 to 19s; yet such local initiatives scarcely seem to rate a yawn from our masters (and mistresses). Where there is no case for destructive criticism, their voices are mute. This is the position we seem to have reached in the year 1985.

What is needed is a fight back. Easy enough to say, perhaps, but less easy, in the present circumstances, to put into effect. But this is just what the teachers, through their organisations, are now carrying through. There is movement also among local authorities, though this has tended to be sporadic. It is our view that both teachers and local authorities need to assert themselves vigorously against current trends, and especially against the continuous centralising thrust which seems the main objective of the present government in education.

Teachers are reduced, in the present jargon, to 'agents' whose job it is to 'deliver' the curriculum (defined by the DES) to students. The in-service training plans for the new General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), as Harry Torrance makes clear in his article, are to follow a typical line-management model. The result may well be that those involved will feel more like conscripts whose job it is to monitor, improve (and continually develop) the process 'rather than . . . simply sampling the product'. Where line management comes in, creativity and involvement fly out of the door. That, it seems, is most likely to reflect the government's educational objectives.

We do well to be wary. Who knows, for certain, what the government's objectives really are? Some forms of teacher appraisal may be positive, when considered neutrally. But, in a leader supporting Joseph's initiative on this, *The Times* (8.1.85), while paying tribute to those teachers whose commitment leads them to give up leisure hours to their work, goes on to say that 'professionalism cannot substitute for *managerial discipline*' (our stress, eds.). A sharp attack on the NUT follows, whose 'militant action' is often led locally by 'political militants' who 'would be the first to be exposed by a better system of "teacher appraisal"'. So, in this view, teacher appraisal is not about classroom effectiveness at all. It is about union 'militancy'. And who can say, in the present climate, that things may not turn out this way?

The present government, and Secretary of State, is losing the trust of the teaching profession **as a whole**. It almost seems they want it that way. It is time a stop was called to this style of 'managing teachers'. The country can no longer afford it.

# Managing Consensus on the Curriculum

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**Nanette Whitbread**

**Forum** is deeply concerned about the growing threat of central control of the curriculum. This article analyses the spate of documents of all kinds emanating from the Department of Education and Science on this issue over the last two or three years. Nanette Whitbread took over in May as President of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education. She is also co-editor of **Forum**.

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There are several disturbing features in the conduct and content of the 1980s curriculum debate which present a sharp contrast with previous major debates about the curriculum in this century. The whole complex process of educational decision-making, as it has developed since the creation of our decentralised system through a delicate balance of partnerships, is being insidiously eroded in a manner intended to display 'a broad consensus' for regression.

Teachers are well aware that the school curriculum must be continually reviewed to accommodate such factors as changes in society, its economy and technology, and progress in human knowledge including that which bears on the learning process. Throughout this century professional discussion of schools' curricula has featured in educational journals, reflecting pressures for change and advocacy of new approaches as well as defence of traditional practice. Nor have these debates been confined to the teaching profession. It is axiomatic in a democracy that education be a matter for public debate.

Governments have seen it as their duty to provide a mechanism whereby informed debate, involving consideration of carefully gathered evidence and opinion from many sources, has preceded adoption of significantly changed policy or official endorsement of a change in direction for curriculum development. That mechanism has been the appointment of independent Consultative Committees or Central Advisory Councils whose reports, sometimes controversial, have carried debate forward and had considerable influence; and for nearly twenty years the widely representative Schools Council promoted informed discussion and development of curricula in greater detail. This was the style evolved to suit democracy and achieve consensus compatible with a degree of devolved local autonomy in the English and Welsh system.

An entirely different and dirigent style has been adopted since 1980, especially by Sir Keith Joseph since he took office. The Department of Education and Science has assumed an unprecedented, upfront directive role in determining the parameters of the curriculum debate by issuing pamphlet and typescript consultative papers and policy statements. Her Majesty's Inspectorate has been drawn into the process of controlling this debate by publication of certain pamphlets which, while inviting comment, delineate the parameters in sometimes rather close accord with those promulgated by the DES and known to be favoured by Sir Keith Joseph.<sup>1</sup> The White Paper, **Teaching Quality**,

was not even preceded by a consultative Green Paper yet pre-empted advice, then in process of formulation by the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers, by prescribing key criteria for initial teacher training courses as a means of securing that new teachers would conform to a model appropriate to the curriculum model favoured by the current Secretary of State and apparently endorsed by HMI.<sup>2</sup>

The new style makes new demands on DES senior civil servants, requiring them to draft advice and consultative papers which reflect the Secretary of State's predilections. This seems at variance with the civil service tradition of public service in the interest of the state as distinct from that of the present government or minister — a tradition and distinction recently upheld by a jury. Moreover, the claimed independence of HMI from the political master of the moment seems similarly at risk.

By contrast with the publication of evidence received and the textual discussion of it in the reports of Consultative Committees and Advisory Councils, the responses to DES and HMI discussion documents are analysed in camera and the conclusions presented as consensus wisdom. The new procedures which form the new style of governance are thus sinister in that a false semblance of public debate is preserved while the terms are centrally controlled and issues presented simplistically. This is a populist strategy which poses a threat to democratic processes in the formulation of educational policy.

Turning now from mechanisms to the form and content of the curriculum debate as managed by Sir Keith Joseph, we find a consistent strategy of retreat to a position from which the schools have struggled over many decades. It is much as mapped out by the **Black Papers** of 1969-75 and elaborated by their offspring the National Council for Educational Standards. The same populist cries of 'quality', 'standards' and cost cutting efficiency ring out in the rhetoric of Sir Keith Joseph's speeches at Sheffield and Newcastle-upon-Tyne in January and July 1984 and at Chester in January 1985 where he has outlined the tactics chosen for securing the retreat. Examples of Black Paper proposals now contained in his own include the following:

'Infant and junior schools should again be teaching units with syllabuses and specific standards of attainment for varied groups of children.'

'Teachers should be teachers again and not social workers.'

The 'national standards . . . laid down for the 7, 11



and 14-year-old (as) *minimum* standards for all pupils of over 70 IQ' advocated in **Black Paper 1975** have become the 'attainment targets at 11 and 16' with 'grade-related criteria . . . at several levels of competence' forecast last July at the CLEA Conference, when he elaborated on his 'realistic objective to try to bring 80-90 per cent of all pupils *at least* to the level now associated with the CSE grade 4' previously proclaimed at Sheffield. The specious commitment to raising all pupils' standards of attainment has to be understood also to indicate streaming for differential competence. Having largely lost the battle for a return to selective secondary schools, the Secretary of State has turned to specified graded curricula as the means to secure similar but perhaps sharper differentiation. The same **Black Paper** pointed the way when calling for 'Comprehensive schools with strict and separate mini-school courses'. This is one context in which the DES paper, **The Organisation and Content of the 5-16 Curriculum**, issued last September, should be examined.

This paper must also be considered as the latest product in the process of distilling a supposed consensus through managed consultation to justify ever increased central direction of the curriculum. This process began in 1980 under Mark Carlisle's regime with **A Framework for the School Curriculum**, followed the next year by **The School Curriculum and Circular 6/81** requiring LEAs to begin conforming to the guidance. Both these DES papers endorsed most of the aims listed in the consultative Green Paper presented to Parliament by Shirley Williams in 1977, defining a common 'core' within the curriculum. Significantly, the first aim — 'to help children develop lively, enquiring minds, the ability to question and argue rationally' — has now been dropped. So has the second — 'respect for moral values . . . and tolerance of other races, religions, and ways of life' — instead of which is 'opportunity . . . to become familiar with the broadly shared values of our society.' The ideological shift is also illustrated by the new requirement for all to study 'the principles underlying a free society'.

A shift in pedagogical stance was marked by changes in language style in the three DES papers. 'Children' who 'learn' became 'pupils' who are to 'acquire knowledge and skills'. The 1984 paper's presentation of the curriculum as instrumental and almost entirely in terms of 'the place of the main subjects' is testimony to the pedagogical reversion from 'the contemporary dangers posed by Rousseau's insistence on nature and Dewey's on socialisation' demanded by G.H. Bantock in **Black Paper 1975**. What is implied is a reversal of the Hadow axiom so that the curriculum be viewed as 'knowledge to be acquired' rather than 'in terms of activity and experience'. Indeed, the 11-16 curriculum is treated in a manner reminiscent of the 1904 Secondary Regulations, but up-dated with new attention to skill acquisition. Reversion to School Certificate patterns has since been mooted through Merit and Distinction awards in the GCSE. The purpose of the 5-16 curriculum paper is to establish 'the place subjects should occupy in substance' within compulsory schooling so that their 'relative importance' may be determined in the light of later 'agreement on objectives' for each. It presages tighter direction than the **Circular 8/83** check on progress in conforming with the 1981 guidance.

It seems that the DES curriculum consensus is being rolled along without regard to the parallel curricular enquiry mounted by a group of HMI in collaboration with schools in five LEAs, which began in 1977 and has so far produced three publications in the **Red Book** series.<sup>4</sup> Secondary teachers, LEA advisers and these HMI have been working together on designing and evaluating a coherent common secondary education in the light of eight 'areas of experience' predicated as a check list by this HMI group. Not only does this co-operative enterprise contrast sharply with the DES managed consultation, but the notion of 'the entitlement curriculum' that each school can develop as its own while acknowledging 'common principles which should inform its construction' across the whole curriculum conflicts with that of imposing prescribed content by subject objectives. The 1983 **Red Book** offers other schools and LEAs useful paradigms for their curriculum development and, along with the Schools Council's **The Practical Curriculum** (1981), some possible ways of withstanding pressures to conform with the sterile new orthodoxy.

The protocol of HMI anonymity may cover schism, corporate schizophrenia or just a range of educational philosophies. Choice of editors, and their selective use of colleagues' material, determine the message delivered in the name of HMI. As a whole HMI surveys have tended to support ability differentiation while being critical of the resultant low expectations syndrome. Sir Keith Joseph could therefore confidently anticipate their support for his differentiated attainment targets, and has apparently required them to produce a series of papers on subject aims, objectives and assessment as a key part in the process of managing curricular consensus. He forecast these to CLEA last summer and the first appeared in December as **English from 5 to 16**. Though a critique is not possible here, we should note the implication that language is solely the responsibility of English departments in secondary schools as this could set back the Bullock Report's stimulus to work on language across the curriculum.

Abolition of the Schools Council, appointment of the new Secondary Examinations Council and formation of the Joint Council of GCE and CSE Boards paved the way to determining national grade-related criteria to give the new GCSE the potential for a more sharply divisive function in controlling internal school organisation. No doubt Sir Keith Joseph expects both the HMI new series of subject documents and the School Curriculum Development Committee to underpin this move and extend it to attainment levels at 7 and 11. However, the 1983 **Red Book** echoed the 1979 **Aspects** survey in voicing concern at external examinations' dictation of curricula and the SCDC has shown a welcome propensity for autonomy.

The Secretary of State's determination to use initial teacher education and training to assert the primacy of subject knowledge in schools has been well served by HMI publications. His creation last year of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE), which must consider HMI institutional reports before approving a course in accordance with prescribed criteria, showed his readiness to slice through established procedures that he perceives as obstacles to his convictions. His decision to suspend the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers

(ACSET) has removed a vehicle for independently monitoring both this new process and the new centralist thrust to in-service training through specific grant for selected courses under **Circulars 3/83** and **4/84**.

The Manpower Services Commission's sudden intrusion into the school curriculum through the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) pre-empted public debate on whether there should be a place for vocational preparation before 16 and how it should emerge thereafter. This then confused discussion on 16-19 curriculum and the 'new sixth', on how courses may best be developed to assist vocational choices. That debate was well under way in both schools and colleges of further education, as well as the initiative taken by the Further Education Curriculum Review and Development Unit (FEU) with **A Basis for Choice** in 1979 to promote widespread discussion and feasibility exercises on developing schemes for post-16 pre-vocational education for those as yet unready to embark on identified training.<sup>5</sup> The DES's evident pre-occupation with the curriculum up to 16 and with the already long drawn out debate on remodelling 16+ and 18+ GCE-type examinations overshadowed the announcement in a consultative paper, **Examinations 16-18** (1980), of an intention to introduce a new pre-vocational examination for the clientele hitherto neglected in schools and further education with which the FEU was so actively concerned. The school curriculum debate had been so managed that Sir Keith Joseph's policy statement on the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) in 17+ **A New Qualification** (1982) appeared quite outside it and more related to the **New Training Initiative** White Paper, the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and the MSC. No semblance of consensus consultations preceded the latter's intrusion with the TVEI in 1983, nor its rapid extension beyond the original 14 pilot schemes.

In its 1984 curriculum paper the DES accommodates TVEI and CPVE in a confused paragraph on 'Pre-vocational studies' that reveals how these forestalled consultations around what was previously subsumed in the phrase 'preparation for adult life'. The MSC upset the management of consensus but poses no threat to Sir Keith Joseph's purpose to secure a national curricular policy incorporating differentiated attainment criteria in accord with his ideological convictions.

The present Secretary of State is evidently as committed as his Premier to conviction politics, to forcing his own faith and instincts on educational policy wherever he can. This is why the hitherto normal consultative processes for open and thorough debate have been abandoned in favour of managing consensus through successive DES papers that define the matters on which responses are sought and then claim a consensus without indicative evidence. Their brevity and lack of theoretical discussion mask the pedagogical counter-revolution that is in hand, and that it is intended to implement by administrative means.

Schools and LEAs, however, still have the right to engage in their own curriculum development. Teachers have a professional and public duty to protect children's education from the whims of a particular Secretary of State.

## Primary Curriculum under Threat

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**David Webb**

Central control of the curriculum is not only affecting secondary schools. As David Webb argues here primary education is far from immune from this pressure. Now Senior Lecturer in Education at Edge Hill College of Higher Education, David Webb taught for a number of years in primary schools.

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The primary school curriculum has been coming increasingly under the microscope in recent times. Teachers should welcome the interest being shown, especially in 'official' publications, since it offers the opportunity for curriculum reappraisal by the profession. However, there is in these developments much that should disturb primary school teachers and those who wish to maintain the tradition of the modern British primary school most fully described in the **Plowden Report**.<sup>1</sup>

There is evidence that the DES is adopting an increasingly 'hard line' on curriculum matters. Significant changes seem to have occurred in 'official' thinking between the publication in 1981 of **The School Curriculum**<sup>2</sup> and the recently published note **The Organisation and Content of the 5-16 Curriculum**.<sup>3</sup> Both the documents speak of the limitations of viewing the primary school curriculum in terms of subjects. **The School Curriculum** offers views of a curriculum based on skills and on areas of experience, but the authors of the later publication seem unable to shake off at all the view of a subject-based curriculum:

'curricular content is most clearly described by reference to the body of knowledge and skills associated with a particular subject'. (para 4)

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### Managing Consensus (cont.)

#### Notes and references

1. Denis Lawton considered the relationship between DES and HMI papers on the curriculum in *Forum* Vol.22, No.3 (1980).
2. Nanette Whitbread discussed manipulation of teacher education in *Forum* Vol.25, No.3 (1983).
3. Quotations from 'Letter to MPs and Parents' by C.B. Cox and Rhodes Boyson in *Black Paper* 1975.
4. *Curriculum 11-16: Working papers by HM Inspectorate: a contribution to current debate* (1977), *Curriculum 11-16: a review of progress* (1981) and *Curriculum 11-16: Towards a statement of entitlement* (1983).
5. The FEU debate continued in *ABC in Action: a report from an FEU/CGLI working party on the piloting of 'A basis for choice'* (1981) and *Progressing from vocational preparation: towards a solution* (1982) which also contains the 1982 paper *Progressing from vocational preparation — the issues and responses to it*, including one from the Schools Council. That body contributed to the 'new sixth' debate with *Planning one-year 16-17 courses* (1983). Vested interests of rival examining bodies has since meant that the nature of the CPVE is being decided through consultations arranged by the Joint Board of BTEC AND CGLI.

**The School Curriculum** is more positive about the value of interdisciplinary elements in the curriculum:

‘... aims cannot be identified with separate subject areas ... Often a single activity promotes a variety of skills.’ (para 33)

In the later document there is little or no mention of interdisciplinary approaches. Indeed, the description of the primary curriculum (para 8) offers an approach which is almost exclusively content-based.

The view of the curriculum in **The School Curriculum** has some built-in flexibility. Mention is made of cross-curricular elements and of the need for a curriculum which can respond to new demands in areas such as the development of economic understanding, environmental education, education for international understanding, political and social education, consumer affairs, the world of work and preparation for life in a multi-cultural society. Mention of these areas, all of which are of great importance in a rapidly changing world, has virtually disappeared from the more recent publication.

In short, there appears to have been a change of emphasis from a curriculum viewed in terms of skills and concepts to one which stresses content. Indeed the insight offered into the teacher’s role by the following extract seems to confirm this view:

‘How much a pupil can be offered and in what form depends on his capacity to receive and absorb it.’ (para 6(3) **The Organisation and Content of the 5-16 Curriculum**)

The view of education contained in such a statement would appear to many as extremely retrogressive.

There have been, therefore, attempts by central authorities to influence *directly* the primary school curriculum. Potentially far more disturbing and damaging in the long term, however, is the *indirect* influence being exerted on the primary school curriculum through the entry criteria into teacher education courses. Some might think that underlying these developments is the belief that control over entry into the profession will ultimately be rewarded by control over the schools themselves.

## Teacher Education

The criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses<sup>4</sup> speak of teachers having to study a subject ‘at a level appropriate to higher education’ in the case of BED students; for PGCE entrants into the profession the level and content of the students’ degrees should be ‘appropriately related to the work of primary ... schools’. While it seems to be possible to study a wide area of the curriculum, it is becoming increasingly clear that ‘appropriately related’ subjects means subjects which have been present in the traditional primary school curriculum.<sup>5</sup> This at any rate is how it is being interpreted by many of those who interview candidates for admission to PGCE courses.

In establishing this condition for entry to courses it appears that certain assumptions are being made. Firstly, it is assumed that the content of a first degree does provide a suitable base from which to develop primary school curriculum. However, if the actual content of first degree courses in English, for example, is analysed this would hardly seem to be the case. Indeed, it could be argued that a candidate who has not been steeped in the academic study of literature for

three years might approach the study of literature in the classroom in a fresher, more vital manner. It would also appear nonsensical that the criteria prevent a modern language graduate from entering a course of primary training while welcoming an English graduate when the major difference between the courses followed would be only the literature studied. In terms of the skills developed by the two students there would be little or no difference, although the modern linguist is likely to have spent more time studying that crucial dimension of the primary school curriculum, language.

The second assumption is that students who have studied a subject to degree level will make better primary school teachers of that subject. However, there are cases of students, by no means rare, who opt to teach in primary schools because they themselves feel a need to move away from their degree subject. They feel unable for one reason or another to offer the necessary stimulus to children in teaching their degree subject at secondary level. Indeed, some teachers claim to derive greatest satisfaction from teaching those areas of the curriculum in which they were originally weakest. Much of this satisfaction is gained from working alongside children as fellow learners. By employing a sophisticated understanding of the learning processes these teachers are able to guide children’s learning while at the same time learning with them. The criteria would seem to suggest a return to teachers as the fount of all knowledge and not the facilitator of children’s learning.

The criteria would also seem to prevent entry to students with degrees which could be considered central to the primary school curriculum. A philosophy graduate would appear to be ineligible but what should be more central to the primary school than asking questions. Psychology graduates too would be hard pressed to justify the content of many of their undergraduate courses in terms of the primary school curriculum. Perhaps most absurd of all would be the educational studies graduate whose degree would be inappropriate if the advice offered in the criteria were to be followed to the letter.

## Effects on Schools

The desire to improve the quality of teachers entering the profession underlying many of the developments outlined is, of course, to be warmly welcomed. However, it is difficult to see how these developments can have anything but an unwelcome influence on primary schools in the coming years; the impact of these criteria will merely undo much of the progress which has been made over the past twenty or thirty years and which has made the British primary school a focus of international attention. In the first place main subject study in a discipline found in the traditional curriculum of the primary school will inevitably lead to a narrowing of perspectives in schools. There is a need for teachers who are able to take a broader view of the institution, a role which those trained in sociology, psychology and philosophy among others would be suitably qualified to undertake.

Focus on an academic discipline during a teacher’s course of training would lead also to a concentration on the academic role of the school. However, the view of primary schools in purely academic terms is one which many have been happy to see abandoned some time ago. Schools will have to be watchful that other aspects of a

child's development such as the social and the emotional are not neglected. Although this is not perhaps the intention of those initiating the changes it is easy to see how such areas could become devalued in the emphasis on an academic discipline.

While these criteria would seem to take good care of the existing bodies of knowledge under accepted curriculum disciplines, what might be termed the 'warp' of the curriculum, it is difficult to see how cross-curricular areas, the 'weft' of the curriculum, can be catered for adequately. Many such areas, education for international understanding and multicultural education for example, cannot be done justice under a single curriculum heading. The view of the curriculum implicit in the changes sought after is one which is static (many would say outdated) and incapable of meeting demands of a rapidly changing society in the late 20th century.

Finally, although it has not been suggested that there should be a move away from a class teaching role for the primary school teacher in the future, it is difficult to see how the suggested changes in the pattern of training teachers in the future will not lead to an increase in specialist teaching in primary schools.

The need to develop a curriculum specialism is accepted. However, this specialism should enable teachers to adopt a consultative role and not to become a teacher merely of that specialism. Neither should a specialism be seen in terms of the list of traditional disciplines taught at primary school level; a teacher should be allowed to develop cross-curricular specialisms so essential if the primary school curriculum is not going to ossify and is to be capable of reacting to the challenging needs of our society.

## Conclusion

Primary school teachers need to be aware of the movement towards central control of the curriculum which is taking place. In many ways it is an insidious movement since it is not seeking control through the teachers in the classroom but rather through those about to enter the profession. The proposed changes will alter significantly the primary school as many of us know it or would like to see it. It is imperative that we should all seek to improve the quality of primary education and this must include the quality of teachers in the classroom. The proposals being implemented, however, could set the British primary school back to an age most of us thought was gone forever.

## References

1. Central Advisory Council for Education (England), **Children and their Primary Schools** (Plowden Report), 1967.
2. Department of Education and Science and Welsh Office, **The School Curriculum**, 1981.
3. Department of Education and Science and Welsh Office, **The Organisation and Content of the 5-16 Curriculum**, 1984.
4. Department of Education and Science and Welsh Office, **Initial Teacher Training: Approval of Courses**, (Circular 3/84), 1984.
5. Central Office of Information, **My Teacher: Teaching in Primary Schools**, (a document prepared for the Department of Education and Science), 1984.

# TVEI and All That

## Harvey Wyatt

The Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), financed directly by the Manpower Services Commission, was launched on an unsuspecting (and unconsulted) education service two years ago. It is a prime example of centralised initiative and control. Here Harvey Wyatt, of The Woodlands School, Coventry, and long-standing member of the Editorial Board of this journal, assesses the nature of this threat to the educational values of comprehensive education.

In Britain we have traditionally prided ourselves on the way in which we have developed our educational system. Unlike many European countries with a single centralised national curriculum, we have encouraged individual schools to work out their own curriculum under the general guidance of the LEA. This has the great advantage that it encourages many teachers to feel more committed and excited about education because they have a real stake in making decisions.

Central government has for some time now been making noises about the danger this presents to the cohesion of the curriculum nationally. Recently localism has been placed under serious threat by the government, backed by the DES. There is now considerable conflict between central government and the LEA's as to who controls education especially since the arrival on the scene of the Manpower Services Commission and its accompanying control over massive public funds.

After three decades of the move to comprehensive education and attempts to produce some real equality of opportunity, the centralising trends outlined above pose a serious threat to further advance. As a result of lack of government direction many conservative-controlled councils still struggle with their collective conscience to remove selection at 11 and take a step along the road to genuine universal education. At the same time in more enlightened areas other schools have experimented with and developed much more advanced methods of organisation in their schools. Mixed ability teaching, continuous assessment of pupils in Mode III examination schemes, active tutorial work and personal education have all engaged the energy of teachers in individual schools, LEA working groups and on examination boards and national committees. More recently much more sensitive forms of pupil assessment such as profiling, modular curriculum and personal and social education have all helped to produce a more sensitive teaching force. Nearly all of these initiatives owe their birth to local developments which have usually been taken up more widely.

It is against this type of development that the most recent moves to centralise the curriculum in our schools must be set. The recent unholy alliance between the government and the Manpower Services Commission and their insidious attacks on localism, but more particularly the teaching force itself, give cause for serious alarm. A number of government moves have been designed wittingly (or unwittingly) to undermine

the confidence and self-regard of teachers. Sir Keith Joseph has made numerous unsubstantiated and unscientific attacks on the quality of teachers and despite his protests at numerous conferences, he appears wedded to removing incompetent practitioners, rather than encouraging the bulk of serious professionals.

Other government attitudes give cause for concern. Attempts to reintroduce selection in the borough of Solihull were not resisted by the Conservative administration and only a revolt by parents saved the day. Added to this the introduction and subsequent extension of the Assisted Places Scheme, although paltry in financial terms, reflects an underlying resistance to true equality of opportunity that is hard to stomach, in a period when the state system is experiencing severe austerity. The attempt by Sir Keith Joseph to introduce payment of fees by parents for students in higher education again reflected how far he is out of touch with public opinion.

The destruction of localism has continued apace with other moves by central government. The demise of the Schools Council heralded yet another body blow to the serious participation by teachers in the development and modification of curricula in schools. The replacement of this by government directed quangos, the Schools Examinations Council and the School Curriculum Development Committee is a disturbing trend for education.

Even the arrival of the General Certificate of Secondary Education, rubber stamped by the government belatedly after more than a decade of procrastination, is beginning to look different in practice than it was in principle. Joseph describes it as a 'system of examinations' not as a single examination and is even contemplating a distinction grade of excellence. Indeed, each step seems to suggest more strongly the tyranny of the examination system writ large. One system of divisive examinations will replace another.

All the previous moves, however, fade into insignificance when set against the most recent onslaught on education by the Conservative administration. The arrival of the MSC in the classroom through TVEI (Technical and Vocational Education Initiative) and the CPVE (Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education — the 17+) threatens all the principles for which comprehensive education was introduced.

TVEI was rapidly introduced under MSC control in November 1982, without any formal consultation with even the DES. By September 1983, fourteen LEAs had embarked on the first year of the scheme. Local authorities had in fact been allowed only five weeks to respond to the first request regarding involvement by the chairman of the MSC.

TVEI, designed to cater for those between 14-18 years of age, has many laudable educational aims. On its own submission it is designed to fit students for a rapidly changing society, offer equal opportunities to both sexes, and provide technical and vocational education throughout the course. It will provide regular written assessment and good careers counselling and encourage problem solving skills, with planned work experience from fifteen years onwards.

It is argued by the proponents of TVEI that all the school-based schemes are different and that after only one year of operation several themes are emerging. The

opportunity to carry out project work, or do work experience, allied to the modular approach to the curriculum breaks down the traditional slog for two years to a final examination at 16+, and is welcomed by students and teachers alike.

It is further claimed that the nature of the course breaks down traditional subject boundaries and encourages integration in such areas as combined sciences, craft-design-technology and business studies and the humanities.

CPVE, a new vocational examination course for 100,000 teenagers who form the 'new sixth', is designed to complement TVEI for the one year student in the sixth and lead to a new type of 17+. Again, as a result of Sir Keith Joseph's pressure for more vocationally oriented courses, fifteen pilot schemes will start next September. The course structure bears all the hallmarks of TVEI. It will offer education and training together with work experience, student profiling and criteria for validation that will be laid down nationally. It is due to be run jointly by the City and Guilds Institute and the Business and Technicians Education Council.

Already the scheme, prior to its inception, is in danger of an early death. The GCE and CSE boards think they can find a ready market for a continuing rival single-subject examination at 17+, the Certificate of Extended Education. Even Joseph himself does not appear entirely happy with the new certificate. He has already expressed doubts about vocational studies and suggested they should be simplified and is worried about 'additional studies'. These would be designed to 'provide time for community studies, leisure, recreation and reflection'. At the rate at which courses are spawned at present we may all feel a need for the latter!

There are several fundamental concerns about the advent of TVEI and CPVE, together with their even more divisive partner, the DES Low Achievers Project, which does not even pretend that it is for any but the least able. The finance provided for these projects lies outside the general budgeting of LEAs and is heavily manipulated by the MSC. In short you follow MSC guidelines or you are not included in the schemes. In addition the funding is extremely uneven in its distribution. The crude current cost for TVEI is £150m spread over 450 institutions during a five-year period. This represents £330,000 per school or college and £2,500 per student. How can such over-funding of a small minority of the school population be justified when schools all over the country are being deprived of the finance to keep themselves functioning at even basic levels? Neither, the government admit, could this level of funding be maintained over even the medium term. Thousands of pupils are therefore deprived of much needed resources if local authorities or individual heads decide for philosophical reasons not to drink from the MSC fountain. Even for the devotees of the scheme there must be a constant fear that the source of money may dry up as a result of central political decisions.

All these schemes are based upon the myth that a largely vocational education will create a highly skilled labour force ready for the job market. The cynic may well enquire what jobs? It is surprising how interested government has become in job related training in the past few years. All the time the labour market was buoyant they were prepared to adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude. Suddenly with heavy youth unemployment this

group has become the focal point of their attention and all the ills of young peoples' disaffection is visited upon parents and teachers. It is suddenly schools and their inappropriate curricula that are to blame.

It is therefore a strange contradiction that alongside TVEI and the DES Project the government should be pushing through GCSE. It is certain that invidious comparisons will be made between the two systems of assessment and it is highly likely that employers and parents with their natural conservatism will vote with their feet for GCSE as being academically respectable and safer in terms of a reducing employment market and higher education. In short we will return to a school system that divides its pupils into sheep and goats at 14+ rather than 11+.

The introduction of centralised MSC and DES funded schemes has done nothing to rationalise education and fit it more carefully to the needs of the current generation of school children. Indeed, the competition between GCE, CSE, TVEI, DES Project and City and Guilds for candidates to swell their coffers grows daily. Still the government continues its pressure for more central control of education.

The great tragedy is that TVEI, CPVE and the DES Project all contain the seeds of ideas that are applicable to the whole educational experience that pupils undergo. Surely it is important that there is a public debate about the philosophy and practice of modern education before precipitate schemes are introduced without proper consultation, at local and school level.

Soon we must address ourselves to the question of whether examinations are appropriate at 16+ at all, given that there are now few students who leave education at this age to take up full-time employment. There is an urgent need to develop continuous assessment of pupils by profiling throughout their school careers and escape from the norm referencing of past years, by final examination, to new forms of criterion referencing.

We must also reopen the national debate on the content of education. What is happening to the concept of the broad liberal education in schools under the threat of utilitarianism introduced by the MSC? Certainly there is a place in the curriculum for life skills and technology, but only a place. We need to reaffirm our commitment to music, art, drama and physical education which have been the first casualties of government cost cutting exercises. We need to fit young people for leisure and recreation as urgently as we do for employment.

The greatest need, however is to place education back in the hands of those who are best fitted to handle it, namely the LEAs, teachers and parents. There is still much to be learned about the complex web of communications and relationships that make our schools function smoothly. This will be aided by further research into the subject, but it needs to be led by grass roots commitment in schools not by a remote centralist approach imposed from on high by the government and the DES. Long live localism!

# In-Service Training for School-Based Examining

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## Harry Torrance

The Department of Education and Science has announced plans for in-service training for the proposed General Certificate of Secondary Education. These raise many problems, as is made clear in this article. Harry Torrance is a lecturer in the Department of Education at the University of Southampton. He has been researching into examinations for many years. His publications include **Mode III Examining: six case studies** (1982) published by Longmans for the Schools Council.

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The involvement of teachers in the assessment of their pupils for public examinations, through both Mode I and Mode III regulations, has long been hailed by its supporters as a more valid way of assessing pupil achievement, as an important vehicle for school-based curriculum development and as an integral element in the overall professionalisation of teaching. The now apparently certain expansion of school-based examining in GCSE, with all new syllabuses 'having to include a compulsory coursework element' (SREB 1985) is likely to be welcomed by many in education, and indeed resisted by many as too radical an innovation. But is it really so radical, and what sort of in-service provision and support are likely to be needed to bring to realisation the essential rationale underpinning school-based examining — that of curricular flexibility? Others have argued that school-based examining, in the guise of Mode III at least, is in fact under threat from current DES proposals (eg Nuttall 1984), while I have argued elsewhere that even the expansion of school-based examining via Mode I regulations may simply lead to teachers becoming school-based assessors of centrally determined aims and objectives (Torrance 1985a). Now that the DES have produced some proposals for in-service provision for GCSE it would seem appropriate to subject them to similar scrutiny and consider the adequacy and implications of the DES model.

## The DES Proposals

Late 1984 saw a flurry of activity from the DES on the question of in-service training for GCSE. Initial draft proposals were sent out to LEAs and Examination Boards in mid-November and were quickly followed by an announcement of funding in December (*Guardian* 29.12.84). The proposals attracted considerable criticism just as quickly. Ted Wragg described the draft as 'one of the daftest private DES papers I have seen for many a year' (*TES* 28.12.84) while Roger Murphy, commenting on the plans as publicly announced, suggested that 'sadly the present proposals don't look as though they will do much more than provide the examination boards with an opportunity to communicate to teachers the size of the problem with which they will be faced' (*TES* 8.2.85).

Certainly, to anyone with any familiarity with curriculum development and in-service training, the



DES model is indeed bizarre. The model as described in a letter from Sir Keith Joseph to the Secondary Examinations Council (SEC) (21.12.84) envisages all teachers likely to be involved in GCSE (186,000) being given 2-2½ days training between January and September 1986. However, only 60,000 of these teachers ('subject representatives' — probably Heads of Department) will actually have supply cover made available for them. They will be expected to attend 'briefings' organised by the examination boards. The local education authorities will then be responsible for ensuring all other teachers receive similar briefings, drawing on the knowledge presumed to have been gained by the subject representatives. No DES finance is suggested for this second stage. Likewise no additional finance is available for the 'effective follow-through and support' which the model acknowledges will be needed.

Clearly the lack of resources, the mechanistic nature of the model and the truncated time scale involved, raise many questions about the likely effectiveness of such a programme. Roger Murphy discusses these and other problems in greater detail in his TES article. However, a number of further points do not appear to have received much attention so far, and these concern the likely substantive content of the 'briefings', rather than their practicality. The time scale and overall emphasis of the proposed training could be revised, but if the assumptions and content remain essentially the same, the programme may still be extremely inflexible when it comes to thinking about the place of curricular and pedagogical development in GCSE.

At first sight the major assumption of the DES model is in fact that GCSE is a development solely related to assessment. The implications of GCSE seem to be construed only in terms of assessment and examining, with the examination boards (rather than the LEAs or teacher training establishments) being considered to be the major providers of in-put to the funded 'briefings', with particular emphasis to be placed on 'areas where new or modified techniques (of assessment) will be needed such as the setting and assessment of coursework' (letter to SEC, p.2). Later in the letter, however, we are alerted to the fact that the DES do envisage a major curricular element in the 'briefings', that element being the dissemination of national subject criteria. Everyone, apart from the Examining Groups' Working Parties, is assumed to require updating on syllabus regulations and assessment procedures and it is the dissemination of such information on which a mechanistic and passive model of in-service support would inevitably focus. Thus assessment 'briefings', organised by the Examining Groups, would actually be a vehicle for the dissemination of centrally approved syllabuses.

Further than this, it is the intention of the DES as expressed in the letter of 21 December to make sure that the examining group inputs are broadly the same, subject by subject, around the country. The DES is making funds available to the SEC to co-ordinate the production of teaching manuals and videos. Negotiations are under way with the Open University to produce two or three videos for use nationally, while it is anticipated by the DES that the teaching manuals will be distributed to all teachers prior to the briefings, with the hope that 'all the examining groups will be willing to

use the same GCSE teachers' manuals and videos subject by subject at the briefings (letter to SEC, p.4). Whether such aspirations are actually realised remains to be seen. The implication of Wragg's and Murphy's criticism, after all, is that the model as it stands is unlikely to prove effective. But given the concern expressed at the start of this article, it seems clear that the DES is treating the exercise as an integral part of its attempts to rationalise the secondary curriculum and in particular to control and utilise the development of school-based examining. Teachers are assumed to be in the position of learning about the new GCSE syllabuses and learning how to grade (summatively) the school-assessed elements — to be, in fact, in the position of trainee school-based assessors of ideas and objectives determined by others. Such a position leaves little scope for realising the flexibility inherent in school-based examining — for the professional and curriculum development which ought to be an integral part of it.

### **Alternative Needs and Alternative Action**

Yet an alternative model grounded in the needs and concerns of teachers for the formative assessment and development of their pupils can be argued for, and could prove far more effective when it comes to generating an understanding of issues in assessment and the relationship between tasks set and tasks marked — between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Research which I have recently completed (Torrance 1984, 1985b) suggests that within Mode I at the moment some teachers already feel rather like conscripts when it comes to involvement in assessment. Many 'mainstream' Mode I schemes already include a school-assessed element. Elsewhere, teachers might opt for a change in or addition to the curriculum which also brings changes in assessment patterns as part of the alternative Mode I. Involvement in assessment thus comes as part of a curricular package. Some teachers come to value such involvement, others do not, regarding it as a chore. Still others value the 'fairness' of coursework assessment to the extent that they pursue it in tandem with curriculum development, as part and parcel of their preferred curricular change. Overall, in-service provision which takes effective account of the variety of practice and attitude which exists at the moment will be very hard to design. Taken at face value, the DES model certainly seems to underestimate the experience and expertise of some teachers, while also underestimating the difficulty of 'inducting' others into a way of working which they may see good reason to resist.

The essential point to emerge from my research however, is the focus of teachers on curriculum and pedagogy. Involvement in assessing pupils was interpreted in terms of developing new courses, new teaching strategies, and hence, new methods of assessment. Such developments could be grounded in the day to day reality of managing falling roles and mixed ability classes or in wider subject oriented and/or professional concerns, but overall the study suggested that where involvement in formal assessment was perceived to be part of a broad, continuing, curriculum development exercise, it was likely to be undertaken with some enthusiasm. Where it was perceived as an unwelcome additional chore, divorced from any

'creative' curricular element, it was not likely to be accomplished particularly well. Thus training which takes place outside the school and focuses exclusively on de-contextualised summative procedures and on teacher involvement in end-of-course grading is unlikely to prove helpful to teachers who are faced with the ever present reality of motivating pupils, developing new ideas and using assessment formatively as part of an overall educational package.

Interestingly enough, such findings do find some resonance with the DES model — in terms of the focus on subjects and subject-based departments. Given that the primary focus of teacher interest is their subject, rather than assessment *per se*, the development of effective in-service work on school-based examining would probably have to be largely school-based itself, focusing on departments, with training materials perhaps being designed to act as catalysts to departmental discussions. Departments provide the basic structure in which a team of teachers can operate and in themselves exemplify the main thread which currently holds teacher assessment together and generates enthusiasm for it — curriculum development.

Whatever the focus, however, it also seems that in-service provision for school-based examining would have to be a continuing activity, feeding off and feeding into the actual marking of work in schools. This brings us on to the issue of 'effective follow-through and support', which the DES recognises but about which it apparently has no suggestions to make. It seems clear that such follow-through would be most effective if it were part of the examining *and moderating* process itself. Rather than opting for postal sampling and statistical manipulation of grades which the logistics of GCSE might suggest is inevitable, but which might lead to school-based grades being changed without teachers knowing how or why, if the Examining Groups chose instead to liaise with the local authorities over in-service training and set up a network of visiting moderators who would maintain contacts with schools during GCSE courses as well as at the end, then a continuing dialogue about curriculum, pedagogy and comparative standards could ensue.

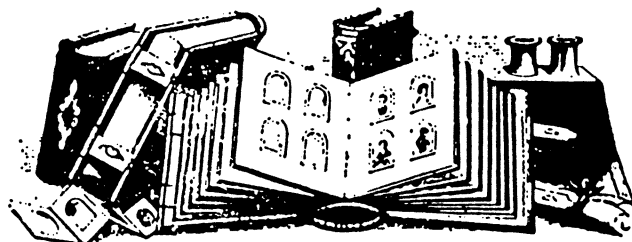
The Examining Groups, and particularly the moderators, would still be in a very powerful position, of course, and the national and subject-specific criteria might still come to be regarded as tablets of stone in some quarters, but at least in-school evaluation and curriculum development would have a mechanism by which soundly based and reasoned argument would be recognised by moderation, while likewise, less experienced teachers needing continuing support rather than end-of-course inspection would find it. The emphasis of examining and moderating would thus come to be on monitoring, improving (and continually developing) the process rather than on simply sampling the product.

At the moment with the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education and the development of Profiles or Records of Achievement, curriculum and certification in secondary schools are in a state of flux. But while there are some signs that TVEI, Profiling, and the like, are moving in one direction — the local interpretation and adaptation of core aims necessitating locally-based evaluation and validation — GCSE might well move in

the other. I have suggested that teachers will be most committed to the school-based assessment of their pupils when that assessment is seen to form an integral part of a more general curricular provision and a personal curricular challenge. It remains to be seen whether developments in GCSE come to be perceived in this way.

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# Hearing Voices: a changing curriculum for a Changing Society

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**Richard Nicholson**

How to bring about effective curriculum change is a serious and difficult problem for all schools. Here, Richard Nicholson tackles the issue on the basis of his own rich experience. Mr Nicholson has been Head of Sheraton School, Stockton-on-Tees (an 11-16 comprehensive) since 1979. He is now head-teacher designate of Sheraton Grange School, created through a merger of his present school with another 11-16 comprehensive. This opens in September 1985.

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If, for a moment, we personify the secondary school, we can see she is suffering role-conflict as never before. If she is a listening school, there are many voices competing for her ear, some whispering insidiously, some shouting fairly raucously. 'O' level courses still provide a *raison d'être* for many teachers and extrinsic motivation for some pupils. Parents are being encouraged to speak up, but the more vocal may well be the 'we want eight . . . nine . . . ten 'O' levels' brigade. What about the silent majority? Central Government's stentorian tones are heard on a number of themes (sometimes apparently contradictory) but if actions speak louder than words we may be more persuaded by government's tendency, when plans are submitted by LEAs for school mergers and closures designed to take out 'surplus places', to reprieve schools with good external examination results and be less clement towards schools of proven worth if other measures are applied.

Others argue forcefully for a more practical and vocational approach, challenging the curriculum of the secondary school for its narrow academic base, serving the interests of only about 20 per cent of pupils. Voices are heard advancing the cause of equality of opportunity, whether between the sexes, for different ethnic groups, or as between handicapped and able-bodied. Some argue that schools must respond to profound changes in society such as changed patterns of employment and non-employment, the information explosion, changed moral values, the values of teenage sub-cultures, and so on. In some deprived areas, schools know they must take account of the virtual breakdown of the social fabric or be seen as grotesquely irrelevant. Some say conserve traditional values in this shifting social order; others say fuel the revolution.

In this veritable babel, how does the listening school decide its curriculum?

First, there is need to avoid the either-or fallacy. It is *not* a choice between life skills and examination skills. In arguing for social and personal development as an essential element of the core curriculum, I have often found myself caricatured as someone who doesn't give a fig for academic excellence, when surely the truth is that the development of efficient study skills is one important aspect of personal development — a life skill that we hope can be employed for life.

Second, she, (the personified school) mustn't stuff her ears with cotton wool; there is need to listen, in spite of the seeming confusion of voices and themes.

The need is to find a dynamic which will enable everyone (pupils, parents, teachers, community) to

articulate their needs, not in a shouting match but in a working relationship. We must avoid a dialogue of the deaf.

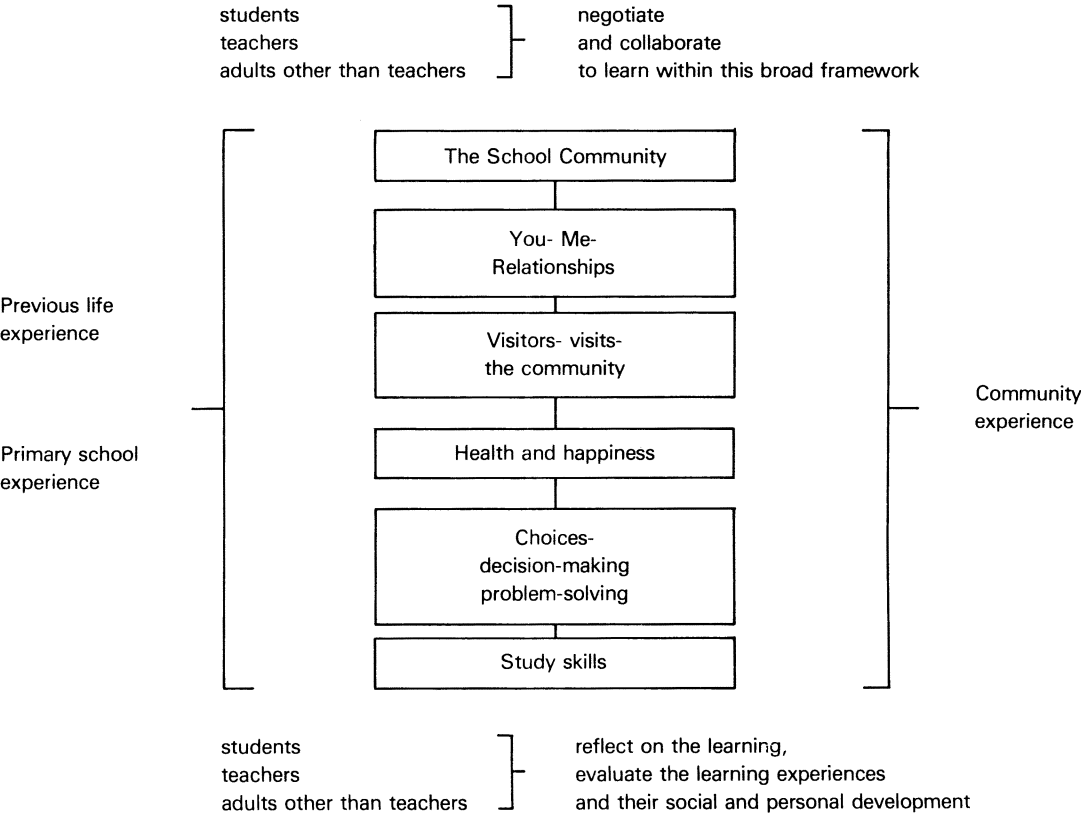
Change, after all, is natural to the human condition (is almost a *definition* of the human condition) but institutions and hierarchies can militate against this natural tendency. If we can remove barriers, take away fear, take away vested interest, build trust and security, we may be able to release people's potential for creativity, or put another way, there is unlikely to be curriculum development without people development.

Let us begin with the teachers. The almost feudal power structures still operating in many secondary schools are inimical to creative change. Rigid line management, however benign the individuals in the line, tends to lead to inertia since everyone is waiting for someone else to take initiatives. Where teachers are encouraged to express themselves, whatever their position in the hierarchy, and to work in overlapping teams towards common objectives, agreed by consensus, they will create their own dynamic for change. This implies a radical change in the politics of the school, challenging the traditional role of the headteacher as the one who holds most of the levers of power, and challenging the Head of Department Barons who tend to build and defend their own territorial empires, even if they have no further territorial demands. We evolved decision-making and power-sharing systems which involved, in turn, every member of the teaching and non-teaching staff who wanted to be involved, and pupils, working together. One of our best committees is the capitation committee. This headteacher has lost that power of patronage!

The best model we evolved for curriculum development was the problem-solving working-party, which, again, tapped the energy and ideas of all staff, irrespective of their positions in the hierarchy — there are too few occasions when Scale 1 teachers can work creatively with more experienced colleagues. School-based curriculum development offers staff development opportunities — opportunities for refreshment, renewal, and growth — in a dramatically altered job opportunity scene for teachers. We set up such a group to review the school's existing arrangements for personal development education and social education across the curriculum, and to make recommendations (in organisational terms, curricular terms, and in terms of methodology) with a view to achieving greater integration and coherence in the social education to be provided in future. After drawing in contributions from

colleagues in all subject areas they came up with an overall conceptual framework to be used with all years in a compulsory core programme called SPD (Social and Personal Development):

We invited pupils to attend the team meetings where we planned our social and personal development lessons. There were teething troubles (a lot of learning even there) but pupils proved their ability not only to



In this working-party teachers flagged up their own In-Service needs which were then met, in the main, by their own colleagues in this collaborative mode of learning. We had a practical workshop on games and devices for ice-breaking in group work and did a lot together to improve our understanding of the group dynamic and the skills needed to ‘chair’ group discussion. Teachers need to know that all groups work through the stages of forming, storming, norming, and performing (otherwise they will be very worried when they encounter difficulties in the early stages) and need to learn to tolerate silence and develop other skills needed to discourage dependency on the teacher as a group leader.

Then we must listen to the pupils. If we open our ears to how they articulate their needs they may well begin by talking in terms of ‘O’ levels to get jobs (we’ve probably conditioned them well) but if we engage them in a proper dialogue, again in a working relationship, they soon move beyond this superficial response. Our recent experience has confirmed my view that pupils are ready and able to take a number of creative roles, in decision-making, curriculum planning, curriculum evaluation, self-evaluation, and assessment.

suggest curriculum content but offer ideas on methodology and suggest strategies for helping disaffected pupils become more involved and better motivated. Negotiated curriculum gives pupils a stake in what goes on so outcomes are likely to be more successful, and the process itself is a potent vehicle for learning. Planning how to make work interesting and meaningful to their peers is not a problem-solving exercise, it’s real!

Once the broad curriculum framework had been jointly planned, groups were able to plan their own approaches in detail. If a group wants to visit leisure centres and other places of recreation, they do the telephoning and make all the arrangements. One pupil *experience* of taking responsibility is worth hundreds of words of exhortation from teachers about the desirability of developing a sense of responsibility. In some schools pupils are kept in a state of dependency until they arrive in fifth year where their teachers bemoan their inability to show initiative.

When the whole fourth year went out of school to learn from the workplace they kept a diary and evaluated the experience and their responses. Because work experience was part of a course, these fourth years

had been prepared for some of the challenges; they had some say in where they were placed; they had been interviewed by the employers beforehand; and they were given support by teachers visiting regularly once they started. They had real-life experiences rather than vicarious ones. They were expected to reflect on the experience at the time and when they returned to school: a useful teaching/learning model. The final write-up included their own evaluation and the teacher's, and became part of their school record of achievement: a useful model of assessment.

Again, the needs of the community should not be communicated from long-range but in face-to-face encounters in working relationships. If the school is to 'belong' to the community in a sense which implies much more than access through the doors, community involvement must penetrate the curriculum. In some parts of the country adults other than teachers are getting into schools but most are professional and middle-class and they are working mainly in social education and careers programmes leaving other areas of the curriculum practically unaffected. Adults other than teachers can and should participate in curriculum reappraisal and curriculum development as well as in implementing teaching programmes. One of the most creative members of the working-party which reappraised our curriculum before we set up our social and personal development programme was an industrial chaplain. Craft Design Technology, for instance, is an area of the curriculum where adults other than teachers could make a valuable contribution particularly considering the number of talented people available because of redundancy, early retirement, and unemployment.

The community is an important educational resource and we must help young people seek out and use to the full all the employment, occupational, educational, and recreational opportunities in their environment; at the same time pupils can help develop the community while at school and as future community members. The community should help shape the school and the school should be a change agent in the community. If these arguments appear to lead us in circles that's exactly as it should be.

It is not my intention here to advocate a particular curriculum since that would contradict my thesis that the curriculum should emerge from discussion between all interested parties as a response to their particular needs in their peculiar situation. I have, rather, offered a model for creating a dynamic for change in the curriculum. I will, however, venture to suggest that some elements should be common core and no pupil should be denied access by reason of gender, age, ability, or the idiosyncrasies of timetabling. These elements (and I am thinking of all ages and abilities) include study skills learning, experiential learning, learning from the group dynamic, learning from the workplace, negotiated curriculum and contract learning, community education, political education, health and sex education, and learning about child development and parenting. People talk a lot about the basics; what could be more basic than this list? If the way we organise in secondary schools cuts some pupils off from these areas we may have to rethink the current orthodoxy about compulsory and optional elements of the curriculum.

# Whole School Policies

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## Brian Boyd

We are glad to include this contribution from Scotland, where educational thinking (and practice) is often ahead of England. Whole School Policies was, of course, a central issue raised in the Hargreaves Report. Here, Brian Boyd, head of Barrhead High School in the Renfrew Division of Strathclyde, discusses this question in the Scottish context. Mr Boyd has long experience of teaching at all levels in Scottish Secondary Schools. He has served on both local and national committees and has a special interest in the teaching of English.

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The term 'Whole-School Policy' has only recently entered the jargon of educational debate, yet it has now become a feature of each new Report which appears. The most recent publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate in Scotland, entitled **Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: School Management**<sup>1</sup> makes five explicit references to whole-school policies (WSPs) and, more importantly, bases its most important argument, namely, that schools must adopt a more thoughtful approach to management, on the premise that whole-school policies should be adopted. What is interesting for those of us involved in the management of schools is not simply how the term has come to occupy such a central place in influential reports, but the apparent lack of attention given to the management implications of such exhortations as the HMI Report makes.

The areas which appear to require a whole-school approach vary from report to report. However they are generally central issues, and very often contentious in their own right. Strathclyde Region, which controls half of Scotland's schools, has recently adopted a model of 'member/officer' committees, made up of elected representatives and education officials. The most recent member/officer report on **The First Two Years of Secondary Education**,<sup>2</sup> rather self-consciously used the phrase whole-school policy, presenting it in inverted commas:

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## Hearing Voices (cont.)

I haven't said much about parents specifically, partly because I see parents as potential AOTs who can get involved in the curriculum rather than stand on the sidelines shouting encouragement, as it were, through fund-raising and other traditional PTA activities — important though fund-raising is these days. PTAs must include educational events that encourage real participation, as well as the other events. Parent Governors should get into the schools and join in working groups with all the others I've mentioned.

Given the unpredictable nature of the future, apart from the near certainty of accelerating change, qualities like adaptability, self-reliance, and the acceptance of responsibility are likely to serve society's needs best, and these qualities are encouraged by interactive modes of learning where people encounter people.

'every secondary school should produce a "whole-school" policy on assessment' (p.27)

It went on to identify other areas such as Primary-Secondary transition, learning difficulties, language and homework as requiring whole-school policies.

Other influential reports have made the same kinds of observations, though the terminology has been slightly different. The Scottish Central Committee on Guidance, in its interim report,<sup>3</sup> argued for 'Guidance as a whole-school function', while the HMI report on 'Learning Difficulties'<sup>4</sup> recommended that support be provided for children on a 'whole-school basis' with the remedial specialist taking on the role of 'co-ordinating individual contributions to a whole-school policy'. Of course the term itself has recent antecedents, the most famous being Bullock's,<sup>5</sup> notion of 'Language across the curriculum'. However, difficulties experienced by schools over the past decade in successfully implementing language policies across the curriculum do not appear to have persuaded the writers of reports to consider seriously the implications for management of such approaches.

When one looks at the influential reports of recent years, on both sides of the border, management implications of the various recommendations are conspicuous by their absence. From Crowther to Bullock, only a slight improvement can be seen in the amount of space devoted to management implications. Later in the 1970's, three major Scottish reports appeared which looked at Curriculum,<sup>6</sup> Assessment,<sup>7</sup> and the problems of Truancy and Indiscipline.<sup>8</sup> Only the latter dealt at any length with management, having sections on 'Staffing', 'Communication', 'The Headmaster', 'The School Staff in operation' etc. The others did not consider such matters. Yet it's the first two reports (now known as Munn/Dunning) which have begun to influence Scottish Education in a fundamental way, creating new interdisciplinary subjects, new courses, new assessment systems and advocating new teaching approaches, all without any explicit attempts to examine the management implications of such changes.

The management of change has become one of the most crucial issues in secondary schools in Scotland. Along with changes in S1 and S2, and in S3 and S4, the Scottish Education Department's 'Action Plan for the 16-18 year olds',<sup>9</sup> has begun to revolutionise post compulsory education and training. Schools and Further Education colleges have been linked together in 'Consortia' under the control of a new stratum of decision making known as Area Curriculum Planning Groups, empowered to co-ordinate time-tables, make decisions on the centralisation of certain minority subjects, and to begin to offer entirely new courses — 40-hour modules, vocationally oriented — both in schools and in local FE colleges. But the question has to be asked — how are schools to adapt their present, largely hierarchical structures to cope with the demands such changes make? And, more importantly, how are Heads to ensure that a whole-school policy is indeed 'whole-school' and not simply a 'diktat' from himself or from sources outside the school?

Harold Rosen in **Language, the Learner and School**,<sup>10</sup> described a problem which will be familiar to staff in many schools up and down the country —

'Some schools are not in the habit of organising discussions about anything — They have neither the tradition nor the organisation for formulating policies agreed on by the staff.' (p.149).

Of course it is the term 'agreed on' which must be defined. Certainly some schools do have structures for such agreement. Some, like Countesthorpe, were actually BUILT with that philosophy in mind and it is reflected in the very design of the building. But most schools are built, literally and metaphorically, on the hierarchical, top-down model of management. R.E. McKenzie wrote with eloquence and with feeling in **The Unbowed Head**<sup>11</sup> of the 'anti-intellectualism' of his staff which manifested itself as aggression at staff meetings. Indeed it is this very experience which causes so many Heads to avoid such meetings and to proceed in a less direct way towards whole-school approaches.

But the school is an organisation and as such can base its structure on a number of models. Indeed the very system of management the school adopts can be crucial in the success of attempts at whole-school policy formulation and implementation. I would argue strongly that structures are not in themselves enough to ensure successful management. Classical Management Theories, Human Relations or Systems Approaches may be convenient labels. But, as Burns and Stalker,<sup>12</sup> put it

'The beginning of administrative wisdom is the awareness that there is no optimum type of management system'.

Thus, though the *label* may be unimportant — rarely do schools fit into one category neatly anyway — the departmental issue is how one achieves the aim of persuading a school staff, made up of subject specialists with boundary maintenance a high priority, of 'restricted' and 'extended' professionals, of people with fundamentally different values, and, indeed different ideas of the aim of education, to work together to produce effective whole-school policies.

The Strathclyde Report,<sup>13</sup> already referred to, devoted *one* of its fifty-six pages to 'Management Implications for Schools'. The most recent HMI report on 'School Management',<sup>14</sup> does not address itself at all to the *process* of formulation of whole-school policies. None of these reports considered the dangers inherent in the notion, namely that

- i. Whole-school policies may be seen by administrators merely as ways of getting things done.
- ii. Whole-school policies can become more monoliths — statements enshrined in policy documents no-one ever reads.
- iii. Whole-school policies become just another instrument of control, another means of ensuring accountability of schools and of staff.

So what is the way forward? The issues are complex. Autonomy of individual teachers, the management of conflict, participating approaches to decision making, the autonomy of the Head, leadership — all continue to make the issue a difficult one to define. Attempts to equate it to existing ideas such as management by consensus do not hold up. Kogan has warned that

'consensus is often the line of least resistance rather than the critical path determined analytically'<sup>15</sup>

Yet it seems clear that staff will have greater commitment to policies in which they have had a hand

in making. Clearly participation, though in danger of becoming an empty, vague word, is an important element.

But participation is not easy. It makes demands on all concerned. I would argue that recent changes, in school based curriculum development, in inter-disciplinary courses, in co-operative teaching, have all made school staffs more sophisticated and more willing to engage in consultation and participation. It may be a time-consuming approach, and people may feel from time to time, that it would be easier to have the Head decide for them, but whole school policies will be an empty sham if those who are to be engaged in their implementation are not also to be involved in their formulation.

It means a change for many Heads — ceding some of their autonomy in the interests of *real* participation.

But what of those who exhort schools to adopt such approaches. Research is needed into the implications of whole-school approaches. If Rutter<sup>16</sup> has indeed made a *prima facie* case for the contention that schools *do* make a difference, then those who influence education policy making at a macro level must examine what they mean when they urge whole-school policies on us.

What is policy? And what is 'whole-school'? Is unanimity necessary? What is the relationship of WSPs with concepts such as climate, organisational health, the hidden curriculum and ethos? What can we learn from the past? Owen's New Lanark, it could be argued, had whole-school policies — but they failed to outlive their initiator. How do we ensure that WSPs transcend a single personality, however influential and committed? And do the successes of the Public Schools in this area, the nearest we have in education to 'total' institutions, have any relevance for the comprehensives of the 80s and 90s?

Schools are now required to have clear aims and are increasingly being held to account by a variety of stakeholders. Whole-school policies are a means of raising the level of debate, of professionalism and of commitment in our schools. It is an area of education in which theory and practice meet and inform each other, and which carries real hope for individual schools to retain their own identity at a time when centralisation of many areas of education seems to be increasing.

What teachers need is time to think — non-teaching time and in-service time. Otherwise the Edward Bear syndrome will continue, and the level of professionalism will not have a chance to rise. Remember Edward Bear<sup>17</sup> had his own way of coming down stairs 'bump, bump, bump on the back of his head. It is as far as he knows the only way of coming down stairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it'.

Too often in schools we expend all of our energies on the daily grind. What we need is time to stop bumping for a moment and to begin to think through the implications of whole-school approaches to some of the fundamental issues in secondary education.

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2. *The First Two Years of Secondary Education*, Strathclyde Regional Council, 1981.
3. Interim Report of Scottish Central Committee on Guidance — 1982.

# Adolescence of a Tertiary System. A Case Study

**John D. Anderson and Annie Johnson**

Four years ago we carried an article by John Anderson on the beginnings of a Tertiary system at Bradford. In this follow-up article, the authors report recent, and positive developments. John Anderson is Head of Beckford Grammar school (a 13-18 mixed comprehensive in Bingley), one of the leading schools in the Tertiary 'Commonwealth'. Annie Johnson is Tutor Co-ordinator for the North Bradford Tertiary Commonwealth.

Gonzalo says in Act II of *The Tempest*, 'i' the commonwealth I would . . . execute all things . . . To excel the golden age'. The golden age in West Yorkshire is generally thought to have been when Alec Clegg was the Chief Education Officer for the West Riding. Nonetheless in our educational Commonwealth in the North of Bradford, we are excelling even that idyllic time in some important ways.

In *Forum* Vol.23, Number 3 (Summer 1981) John D. Anderson wrote an article 'Birth of a Tertiary System: a Case Study'. The genesis in 1980 of what is now the North Bradford Tertiary Commonwealth was there outlined. The 13-18 Comprehensive Schools of Beckfoot, Nab Wood, Saint Bede's and Salt have been joined since 1981 by Saint Joseph's College, a Roman Catholic girls' school; the Youth and Community Education Service, Shipley College and the Careers Service remain integral members. Very varied provision, focusing on 16-19 work, but by no means exclusively so, is now in existence. What was a mewling infant is now a lusty adolescent.

Since 1981, Bradford Local Education Authority has funded, by separate budgets of hundreds of thousands of pounds, six Commonwealths or Consortia which cover the whole district. Since the money is only

## Whole School Policies (cont.)

4. *The Education of Pupils with Learning Difficulties in Scotland*, A Progress Report, 1978, SED.
5. *A Language for Life*, Bullock, 1974, DES.
6. *The Structure of the Curriculum in S3/S4*, 1977, Munn Report.
7. *Assessment for All*, 1977, Dunning Committee.
8. *Truancy and Indiscipline in Schools in Scotland*, 1977, Pack Committee.
9. *16-18 An Action Plan*, SED, 1983.
10. *Language, the Learner and School*, Barnes *et al*, 1969.
11. R.F. McKenzie, *The Unbowed Head*, 1977.
12. *Mechanistic and Organic Systems of Management*, Burns and Stalker.
13. SRC Report on First Two Years of Secondary, *op. cit.*
14. HMI Report on 'Management', *op. cit.*
15. *The Politics of Educational Change*, Kogan, 1975.
16. *15,000 Hours*, Rutter *et al*, 1979.
17. *Winnie the Pooh*, A.A. Milne, (1926 (!)).

available for co-operative work between institutions, it is a mighty spur to joint planning. The fact that Bradford has an Assistant Director of Education responsible for all 13+ education is a forward-looking and catalytic administrative arrangement.

### **Progress up to 1982**

By the summer of 1982 an effective managing mechanism has been established, lacking only a person with sufficient time to oil it at its pivotal points. The first stage of development involved establishing a Policy and Finance Group. This consisted originally of the Heads of the five schools, the Principal of Shipley College, a Careers Officer and a Youth and Community Officer. The group decides policy and financial allocation. A Business Group of timetablers, the Vice-Principal of the College, a Youth and Community Officer and a Careers Officer also meets and either makes the Commonwealth work or points out that policies dreamed up above in Elysium are not actually practicable on the ground.

In the year 1981-2, ninety-three students worked under the Commonwealth's aegis. The City and Guilds one-year foundation courses, part of the category four provision of Bradford's Document 'O' (see article in Summer 1981 **Forum**), took time to get established; the College provided much of the uptake. This was felt to be satisfactory since the schools provided most of the 'A' level uptake. The City and Guilds courses took place at the College all day on Tuesdays and Thursdays and at schools on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Each was costed and granted a sum for salaries plus 10 per cent of this for consumables, books and equipment. Courses were run in Engineering, Community Care and Commercial Studies. None of the twenty-four candidates who finished the courses failed to gain a pass in 1982. Students who had, in some cases, begun in remedial groups in their schools, experienced real success and satisfaction.

Business Education Council General Courses flourished; twenty-four students successfully studied on them in the year 1981-2. Some schools ran a module, such as typing, in their own establishment, but most of the work was carried out at the College, usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Schools taught 'O' level and CSE courses to run concurrently and combine with the BEC qualification.

The two-year joint 'A' level courses, which ran mostly between 1600 and 1800 hours were described in the 1981 article. In 1982 the first exam results were achieved. In Design, one sixth former gained a Grade B and with his project became the Young Engineer of the Year for the whole of Great Britain. His prize for his school went to the North Bradford Tertiary Commonwealth. In all, forty-three students finished the 'A' level courses open to the Commonwealth members. Results were satisfactory.

### **Innovations 1982-83**

In 1982 a Tutor Co-ordinator was appointed for the Commonwealth. This was originally only a one-year appointment, but as Bradford has now consolidated its 16-19 budget, it has become a permanent post from summer 1983. The Tutor services all meetings, and acts as an efficient liaison officer between all parts of the

Commonwealth, which had threatened at times to become a far-flung Empire. Instead of busy people trying to add Commonwealth duties onto their other jobs, this full-time appointment has greatly improved the effectiveness of the Commonwealth. The appointment of this tutor Co-ordinator was made on FE Lecturer II terms so that good candidates would be attracted, and evening and holiday work as well as eight hours teaching are integral parts of the appointment. The Tutor Co-ordinator has a first loyalty to the Commonwealth and not to any one of its constituent parts. Each institution has a link-person, often the Director of Sixth Form, though the Tutor Co-ordinator communicates regularly with both Heads and consequently has to travel a good deal, but fortunately within a restricted area.

It became obvious that the area of greatest need and least success was that of the unemployed teenager. In the autumn of 1982, the Tutor Co-ordinator set up a Sixteen to Nineteen Activities Programme (SNAP) for the unemployed. An out-reach worker was appointed. Activities were timetabled throughout the Commonwealth; there was some take-up with unemployed young people doing painting and decorating, outdoor pursuits, photography, creative writing, drama, first aid, on a regular basis.

The Tutor Co-ordinator was involved with activities at the Kirkgate Unemployment Project in Shipley and £500 for equipment was donated to this from the Commonwealth.

From August 1982 a determined effort began to enable the Commonwealth to become involved with the Youth Training Scheme (YTS). After many months of convoluted conversations and innumerable papers, the Manpower Services Commission finally agreed to the foundation of the Airedale Youth Training Consortium (AYTC) in May 1983. The Commonwealth was determined that quality training should be offered. The members of the Commonwealth had extensive combined knowledge of teenagers and firms in the area. The YTS offered work and money to the 16-year-olds; these were the two things that they required if they did not want to stay in formal education. The Commonwealth could provide, in addition, valid training and education in a well-thought-out scheme. A Steering Committee made up of the Policy Group, local employers and the Careers Service, was set up in February 1983. An employer was chairman and other employer members were representatives of the three occupational family groupings which the committee felt were viable. This was expanded in 1984 to cover more occupational training facilities.

The scheme is 'Mode A' under the umbrella of Bradford Authority's Mode A scheme; the on-the-job training is being offered in the Commonwealth's institutions in the workshops, laboratories, resources centres and offices where there is full-time supervision, and in local firms; altogether 150 places exist. Off-the-job training is carried out in the College; so far MSC have set their corporate face against school teachers taking any part at all. This seems anomalous when FE lecturers are timetabled to work part-time on the AYTC. Several teachers wish to participate and we continue to press this point; but our schools have no falling rolls and so there is no space at all in them to accommodate off-the-job training.

# A Leicestershire 'Cluster'

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## Martin Kerrison

At present 16 to 19 Co-ordinator for the South-West Leicestershire 'Cluster', a term he explains below, Martin Kerrison has taught in London, Derbyshire and Leicestershire comprehensives. Describing himself as 'a strong supporter of state and comprehensive education, and mixed ability teaching', he argues for new approaches to tertiary education.

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In an attempt to make more effective use of resources, expertise and plant and to facilitate the provision of a comprehensive curriculum post-16, Leicestershire upper schools have been grouped with local FE colleges into what are endearingly called 'clusters'. There is some speculation that the initial impulse to cluster owed as much to the need to head off the tertiary movement as to any more informed motive. Nonetheless clusters have been more or less active for getting on for two years and have been relatively generously staffed.

No two clusters are exactly the same or have quite the same problems. The Leicester City cluster, for example, is made up of over thirty upper schools and a number of FE colleges. The idea of co-ordinating and linking activities across that number of institutions I find terrifying. Clearly methods and structures need to be very different in that situation from those in my own more 'manageable' group of four upper schools and one

FE college. Staffing, in all but the city cluster, is at the level of two additional members of staff per cluster. The use of these two 'bodies' is at the discretion of the cluster principals, but the pattern which most clusters have adopted is one pioneered by my own, where one full-time non-teaching post as 'cluster co-ordinator' is complemented by a proportion of non-teaching time for selected members of staff within the contributing institutions.

The need for schools and FE colleges to talk and work together more effectively has been recognised but it has generally been accepted, not necessarily only because of a clear awareness of student needs, but because, at a time of standstill budgets and falling rolls, institutions face problems which are forcing them to turn from rivalry to co-operation. It is no longer possible for an upper school, however large, to make effective provision for all the needs of all its students. If range of

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*Continued from page 82*

An area of progress within the Commonwealth has been the Rising 16's programme. Local Youth Centres have been opened during the day. Youth Leaders, equipment and teachers have been provided. Thus a programme has been mounted mainly for those over 15 who would benefit from a more personally negotiated curriculum in a less formal setting than the school. Groups of twenty pupils from each of the five schools were attending in the year 1983-4. Discontinuities of Youth Service staffing and lack of teacher participation were significant stumbling blocks in 1982-3. From 1983 a teacher was often timetabled to take part and liaison between school and youth centre, and youth workers were appointed for the academic year where possible. Agreed areas of experience were covered. A major aim was to try to link vulnerable youngsters with education training facilities for when they leave.

Russian 'O' level is a new Commonwealth subject offered jointly in 1983-4 and 53 pupils from 13-18 were involved. 'O' level Computer Studies is offered at Shipley College for the second year.

The Tutor Co-ordinator is running enrichment seminars for the more able on such topics as Philosophy, Psychology, Basic Computing, Peace Studies, Esperanto and Ecology; these have been enthusiastically received.

Adult Access to the Commonwealth is increasing in leaps and bounds. From 1983-4 twenty-nine adults took part in various 16-19 classes, and we hope by extensive

publicity to increase this number greatly in 1984-5. As has been found throughout the country, adults blur the peer group pressures. Students' presuppositions are jolted when an adult comes into the classroom because he/she wants to be there, and sets about proving this by working very hard.

The relationships fostered in the Commonwealth have led to St. Bede's and St. Joseph's co-operating on subjects such as 'A' level Further Maths, Geology, Computer Studies, Sociology, Theology and Art; and Salt and Beckfoot on 'A' level German. Major bilateral co-operation has occurred between Nab Wood and Beckfoot which are only 15 minutes walk apart. There the total sixth form 'O' level provision has been doubled by teaching all the subjects jointly in one or other of the schools. Electronics, Local History and Social Studies, for example, have been offered where previously they were not available to some or all of the sixth formers. All 'O' levels in the Sixth are timetabled in half days and so there are no travel problems. A Joint Careers Convention — including many of the big employers, is held by all the Commonwealth Institutions.

Thus the North Bradford Tertiary Commonwealth continues to flourish and break new ground. Given a supportive authority and geographical propinquity it shows that liaison between the institutions is both cost-effective and, far more importantly, educationally creative. Inter-institutional insemination produces startling offspring.



curricular needs doesn't get them, lack of space or plant will. The coming of CPVE, of course, is a new stimulus to co-operation across the great schools/FE divide.

The South-west Leicestershire cluster, for which I work, is made up of four schools — Lutterworth Upper School, John Cleveland College, Earl Shilton Community College, and Bosworth College (all 14-18 Upper Schools) — and Hinckley College of Further Education. The furthest distance between the colleges is some twenty miles and Bosworth College, for example, is over ten miles from Hinckley College of Further Education. Two of the upper schools are relatively traditional ex-grammar schools, and two are relatively new and progressive institutions.

The main focus of my work within the cluster has been the fostering of curricular links and the encouragement of link courses, although other major pre-occupations have been the construction of a co-ordinated inservice programme and the development of working groups across the colleges. It has to be said that there was an element of cart before the horse with the two last mentioned activities. To put together an effective inservice programme meeting some of the common needs of five institutions differing in history, tradition, style, ethos, and apparent aims, is no easy task. Ideally every institution would have clearly defined aims and objectives and a staff development programme aimed at meeting both these and the career needs of staff members. A locally based inservice programme could then be designed to help achieve these aims and meet staff development needs. In practice, more often than not, colleges, like people, stumble on from day to day, getting through them in one way or another but often having forgotten (or not finding the time to reflect upon) why they do any particular thing, or do it in a particular way. If our Minister really is interested in improving standards he would do well to build in a little more time for reflection, but I imagine he would counter the suggestion with strictures about efficiency, cost to the public purse and perhaps even a reference to the devil finding work for idle hands. Similarly, to try to set up working groups across institutions which are facing common concerns but where the relevance of a wider context and forum for discussion is less apparent than the time required to achieve this is less than easy. There is a fund of goodwill, but there is a limit to the amount of blood to be squeezed even out of willing stones. Curricular links, I believe, have to come first — purposeful activity which generates other kinds of involvement.

I outlined reasons for curricular links at the beginning of this article but there is another kind of justification which should be stated. To mention vocational or pre-vocational education is, in the presence of many teachers, to court disaster, or at least to encounter deep suspicion. We are witnessing a kind of attempt to shanghai education — a devaluation of traditional liberal values and the imposition of a utilitarian view which measures them against economic usefulness and to hell with personal development and social responsibility. But that, I think is only part of the story. I am not one of those working in the state sector who believes that comprehensive education has failed. I believe that, measured against any criteria, let alone the only one generally mentioned — academic achievement — comprehensive schools have been far more successful

than the divisive tripartite system they have almost entirely replaced. If that suggests they have no faults and have done the best of all possible things in the best of all possible ways then I would want to point to an area in which comprehensive schools have proved almost as remiss as those schools they have replaced.

In terms of teaching and learning styles little has changed. Indeed the pursuit of examination 'excellence' has led to the wholesale adoption of many of the values and all of the teaching and learning styles of the grammar schools. There is a kind of perverse snobbery in the perpetuation of the great divide between training and education which associates training with low status doing and education with high status listening and writing. Comprehensive schools for all their often stated liberal aims and objectives have almost entirely followed the listening and writing route in a desperate attempt to prove that they can do it better than the grammars. Traditional, didactic teaching is not the best way to educate anyone but it is at least accessible to the highly literate and articulate group which, in theory, the grammar schools were set up to cater for. For the vast majority of students now as in the past, emphasis on the written word with its recording, memorising, (but not necessarily understanding), and then recalling and re-recording of facts, is a barrier to achievement. I do not suggest that knowledge has no value or that students should not learn in this way, but it is an incredibly narrow view of what learning is about. It has led to the labelling of most of our children as relative failures, as well as to such a restricted and narrow provision, even for the academically successful, that in terms of social and practical skills, these are often helpless and inept.

A quick tour of any modern or ancient secondary school would reveal teaching group after teaching group busy writing, often enough copying from book, board or nasty modern things like OHPs. Ask to see a statement of school aims and they will talk in positive terms about doing the best for all pupils, all round development, preparation for life and so on. There is a serious discordance between methods and aims which smacks of hypocrisy. Assessment too has focused on that which can be written and more often than not becomes a critique of the quality of the writing alone as if there was nothing else of value in a student but this ability. The move towards different kinds of assessment, with all their potential dangers and difficulties — particularly of profiling — is a recognition of past deficiencies. The broadening of the kinds of educational experience and the context within which they take place, which is seen in initiatives like TVEI and CPVE and other pre-vocational developments, can be a positive attempt to improve provision for all students rather than a move towards narrow job training and a re-introduction of a system which separates sheep from goats. The burden of my argument is that we have never stopped separating sheep from goats although we've kept them under one roof and that a focus on written expression as a means of selection makes rather less sense than making sure that *all* students are given opportunities to develop knowledge, appreciation and skills through a curriculum which recognises that some things are best learned in context and by doing rather than listening and writing.

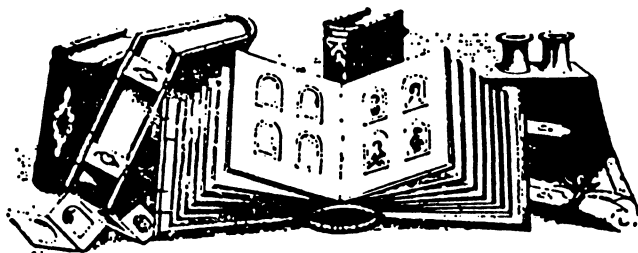
From that standpoint I have been working for the



past year and a half to encourage the development of link courses which could generally be termed pre-vocational. Two of the upper schools in my cluster are TVEI schools, Earl Shilton and Bosworth, and they have taken advantage of the facilities and expertise available at the Hinckley FE College in areas like robotics and computer-aided design. All four schools in the cluster are offered opportunities for fifth form activities days and computer applications days which are multi-functional in that they have both specific curricular aims and also aim to introduce students to an FE college and some of the people who work there. Students of computer studies, that oft and very properly maligned, largely academic study of computing, have an opportunity on computer applications days to see and work with computers in a variety of practical infotech and industrial contexts.

There are other link courses for students in the fifth year and one of the upper schools has opened a project centre jointly with Hinckley FE on the Hinckley campus, where all students can spend a week at a time in their fourth year, with a chance for more later, working collaboratively at a variety of projects having practical outcomes. The hope is that the project centre facilities will be available to the other cluster upper schools as the Centre develops. Bosworth College, Earl Shilton Community College and Hinckley College of FE have this year joined together to deliver one of the pilot CPVE schemes and here again the expectation is that the scheme will involve all five cluster institutions next year. There is a good deal of other collaborative activity of course, including the design of sixth-form TVEI provision with its common core of experience.

When I am asked to talk about CPVE, one of the areas I underline is the benefits to date from CPVE within the pilot scheme. Under benefits I list four points (i) the customer or clients like the product or service: ie the students like the course, (ii) both FE and schools staff are developing a broader perspective and educational context because of the nature of the course, (iii) we can see a potential broadening of sixth form curriculum for *all* students, and (iv) the potential development of more varied approaches to teaching, learning and curricular provision through schools from the sixth form down. These seem to be significant gains and are, for me, what the whole business of clusters is about.



# Pupils as Mirrors

**Alan Thomson**

**Forum** has maintained a continuous interest in the close observation of children's learning activities in school. This article discusses modern techniques which teachers have found helpful, particularly when working in groups to analyse and discuss experience. Alan Thomson is Director of educational television and audio-visual aids for Hertfordshire. He has taught in primary schools, at Crown Woods and Sydenham schools in London and at Wall Hall College of Education. He has also spent ten years in industry.

Since 1981 I have been a member of a group which now calls itself Longsearch. We meet regularly at Longmore Teachers Centre in Hertford. We meet to share our experiences of examining practice in our work situation, which for most of us is in the classroom. We use various techniques which, in the course of this article I intend to examine. The activities of Longsearch have been described in some detail in a previous issue of this journal.<sup>1</sup>

In an interim report to the Schools Council in 1982 we distinguished between 'structure' and 'function' when reporting our observations to each other. That is to say, whilst we discussed an event it was important not to confuse what we thought we were looking at, from the way in which we looked at it. We found that discussion about camera angles or the difficulty of hearing what was said on a tape, confused the issue of why we were observing and what we observed. I think that happens a lot in other groups because it's safer to talk about equipment than about each other's ideas. It was for us a stage we had to go through whilst we were getting to know each other. There's nothing wrong with going through that stage but a lot of groups seem to get stuck and never go beyond it. I am going to write very briefly about structural techniques not because I am stuck but because I want to share some of the perceptions we have had about them.

At some time or another at least one member of Longsearch has considered or tried one or more of the following:

- video
- cassette recorders
- radio microphones in conjunction with cassette recorders
- journals and diaries
- photographs
- transcription
- forms of analysis
- triangulation
- interval and frequency checks

I would like, of necessity very briefly, to comment on each one of these in terms of our experiences and perceptions.

Although we visit each other's classrooms on occasions no-one has a working brief to do so and therefore some of the techniques listed didn't work too well because another person was needed to help. A case in point is triangulation which brings together the perceptions of three people about one event: the child, the teacher and an observer.<sup>2</sup>

In the Summer term of 1983, a member of Longsearch had a visitor from The Schools Council for a few weekly visits. The visitor was co-operative and willing to attempt triangulation, and this worked well for all concerned. This success was an exceptional experience in our group. We think that the success of triangulation hinges amongst other things upon how the teacher and the pupil perceive the third person in the triangle. Jennifer Nias went into classrooms to help teacher researchers but in a refreshingly frank report<sup>3</sup> admits that local teachers knew her as a tutor at the Cambridge Institute and so perceived her either as a confidant or as an authority in their classroom. She admits failure because it would have taken too long to establish herself as an equal partner in the enterprise. The worst thing to happen in attempts at triangulation is for the third person to perceive themselves as an authority figure, a consultant or an adviser, and I am referring to perceptions, not job roles.

Other types of recording events in the classroom which really require outside assistance are forms of analysis of behaviours. We as a group did not think that Flanders Interactional Analysis categories<sup>4</sup> were appropriate to our needs. And even when we modified the forms or made our own categories they were impractical to use without outside help. A member of the group also tried to monitor what activity she was engaged in at regular intervals of two minutes during a lesson. Another tried to monitor his performance by counting how many times he was interrupted by a child whilst trying to help another child. Both of these strategies failed because they interfered with the situation too much.

A much acclaimed method of observing behaviour is video recording. This reputation is well earned but when tried is often disappointing. This is because of the difficulty of having expensive equipment at hand when it is needed, setting it up *in situ*, and overcoming the simple technical and operational problems. But the greatest source of disappointment is normally with the end product, what's on the tape. A single camera and recorder in the corner of the classroom will not produce a 'Panorama' programme. Instead, every sound in the room, reverberating from hard walls and windows, is unselectively recorded. Visually, events to be viewed are either just out of shot or so far away that details are lost because of restricted picture resolution. Nevertheless it is worth persevering. Members of the Longsearch group found that it was best to make recordings for short periods, not more than 10 minutes, with restricted objectives. Every minute of recording has to be viewed to be assessed, and it's easier to find a spare ten minutes soon after the recording than trying to view a whole morning's work of recording. It is also important to view as soon as possible after recording whilst the memory of the real event and its peripheral ideosyncrasies are still fresh. The need for a camera operator can be overcome by deciding to record the occupants of only one table or one activity area which

enables a microphone to be placed strategically. However, a lot of attempts, and trial and error may be necessary to get what is wanted. Frequent use gives the pupils concerned experience of exposure to the camera. They will then, after sharing the reason for making the recording, accept the presence of the equipment.

One way of demystifying such efforts is to offer pupils the opportunity to use the equipment themselves to make a 'programme'. You may need to go on a course or get help from a more experienced colleague or advisory staff before embarking on that enterprise. I would advise against showing your own recordings to a class, but much depends upon your relationship with the pupils concerned. The same sort of contract with pupils is desirable when audio recording in classrooms. The threat imposed by making people perform in front of a camera is amplified in 'Teachers as Autonomous Learners'.<sup>5</sup>

Micro cassette recorders are particularly useful. The Longsearch group has made extensive use of the type which has a recording time of one hour for each side of the cassette. Such a recorder need not be expensive and is easily carried in a pocket or brief case. It is capable of recording unobtrusively using the internal microphone or can be used with an external microphone. Playback from these machines can be improved by using stethoscope-type earphones; and with an appropriate lead, selected parts of a recording may be copied on to a standard cassette recorder. The advantage of the micro-cassette recorder is that it is small and light enough to be carried and brought into operation within seconds of being needed. The quality of the recording is good enough for speech transcription but the acoustics of many classrooms with hard walls, windows and floors operate against good recordings from even very expensive machines. Some trial and error experience is necessary to be able to predict the viability of recording in a particular situation.

In theory, radio microphones are ideal because the microphone can be slung about 10" away from the speaker's mouth without trailing wires. In practice they are a lot of trouble to set up and children seem not to like wearing them. I have successfully recorded one child in a hospital school during one whole waking day, by having an aerial and recorder in the attic of the main building, but less ambitious recordings in the classroom would be easier and more reliably done with a micro cassette recorder.

All the recording techniques we have used to observe children's behaviours, or the interaction between pupil and teacher, are restricted by the time available to view or to listen to relevant material more than once. We have found that transcription is invaluable. If the transcription is placed in a narrow column on a page leaving spaces for further columns for timing, notes and comments, then the resultant spreadsheet is very convenient to use when discussing the situation with the pupils concerned, or showing to interested and sympathetic colleagues. However, transcribing is a laborious business and the recording will have to be reviewed over and over again to get as accurate a record as possible. This, in itself, sharpens one's perception of the real experience as does any form of written documentation.

Probably the most common method of recording events in the classroom used by members of Longsearch is by writing. A diary or a journal kept from day to day

is most valuable even if more 'modern' methods of recording are also used. The equipment needed is minimal, cheap and reliable. Such records can be searched quickly, summarised as necessary, and are easily reproduced. They are available for scrutiny or amendment in railway waiting rooms or wherever required. I carry a wallet which is an indexed notebook into which I can write occasional lecture notes, reading notes and my own reflections entered in journal form. A concise diary kept regularly by a class teacher can reveal insights into continuities of behaviour that might elude even a good memory. This sort of record keeping should not be confused with records which are accessible for scrutiny by others. It is personal and private, and although I started by recording pupils' activities whilst I was doing some part-time teaching, in a short while it became a personal reflection on my own practice.

I doubt if it is possible to observe pupils in the classroom without at the same time reflecting upon oneself as the teacher. This will be encouraging news for those teachers who are being asked to use video recorders to make assessments of pupils' performance. It is quite reasonable to expect that a child, whilst working for a teacher, is trying to gauge and match up to the teacher's expectations. How well the child does that is at least part of the teacher's criteria for assessment. However, whilst gauging the teacher's expectations the child must also have criteria for assessing the teacher. And that is what may be inferred from watching the videotape. So as well as looking at your children through 'your eyes', you can also try to look at yourself through theirs. We were delighted when this discovery occurred at a Longsearch meeting, whilst looking at a video recording made by a member of the group.

There is another trend emerging from our group which was not anticipated. Those of us who have been using recording techniques regularly for some time are actually using them less. Some now find that whilst teaching in their classroom they are more effectively reflecting upon what they are doing. It is as if the cassette recorder or the camera were on all the time. After observing and reflecting upon one's performance for a long time, there is a sharpening of sensitivity about what is going on. It seems that we have improved our capacity to be constructively critical of our perceptions. It is as if we are constantly examining and re-appraising our practice from another viewpoint. So we are hopefully responding more quickly and more effectively to our professional environment. In this way I believe that we are becoming better teachers and finding it possible to start discarding all the paraphernalia of observation which was so essential when we started. Perhaps we have turned through three hundred and sixty degrees of the 'Spiral Curriculum' of our personal professional development.<sup>6</sup>

For some who are thinking of observing their classrooms there is a message. You may feel that you cannot start because you haven't got suitable equipment or appropriate support from colleagues or from outside the school. It needs courage to start and determination to continue. It is easy to defer the start because of inadequate provision or circumstances. I would encourage anyone in that position to keep a journal with pen and notebook, starting now. What is essential is an eagerness to learn. An eagerness of the sort that we hope from our pupils, and a willingness to accept that our previous understandings and expectations are subject to revision.

In this article I have looked at the kind of equipment and techniques which can be used to observe classrooms, and I have drawn from the experiences of the Longsearch group. Let me add one further, important resource to the list: the group itself. We are a fairly disparate lot with different experiences and roles. We have two things in common, a desire to learn in the way I have described and a willingness to listen. We are not in essence a group of talkers (although we all do our share of that), but we are listeners. We listen to each other speculating, telling stories, thinking aloud, and reshaping our ideas. We are often very critical but we always try to be sympathetic and listen to each other. That is a resource more valuable to me than a video recorder. However, we are lucky enough to have equipment available as well, when we need it.

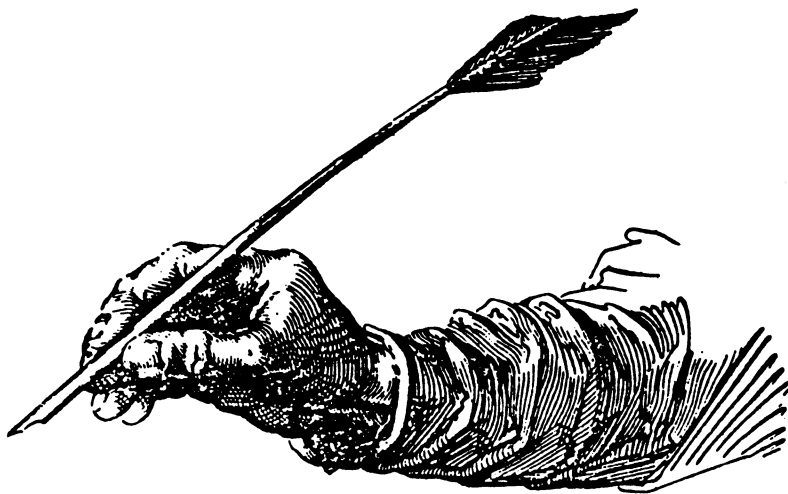
The thoughtful use of one or more of the techniques I have described focuses attention on significant behaviours in the classroom. Recording whether by pen or on tape brings to light features which may otherwise not have been noticed. Reflection on these events highlights ideas about their significance and produces hypotheses, or plans of action for similar recurrences. Sharing with our colleagues is the first test of their validity and their application in a more general context. In this way practice reformulates theory and theory reorganises practice.

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# Discussion

## The Pre-Vocational Curriculum



Many schools across the country have embarked upon a variety of Pre-Vocational courses offered by City and Guilds, BTEC and RSA and including the new CPVE. These courses are characterised by a broad balanced programme of general education and the development of personal attributes. Pupils are involved in organising and arranging their work in partnership ('negotiation') with both teachers and a variety of agencies. Learning is student centred, experiential, resource and community based. It is characterised by career guidance and counselling structures. Information about employment and training opportunities is provided, as is real or simulated work experience. Pupil achievement is criterion referenced and formative assessment is a feature of the learning process along with Profiling.

Such courses are part of an overall national policy designed to improve the vocational relevance of education and training for young people. They go far beyond that however, in that they are part of a general curriculum overhaul involving the organisation and structure of the curriculum, teacher methodology and the role of assessment and reporting. A commitment to Pre-Vocational Education (rather than simply Pre-Vocational Courses) is to play a part in an overall strategy for national curriculum reform.

Schools, I suspect, have long recognised that the curriculum has not changed sufficiently quickly to match the changing needs of its clientele. If 'education' is concerned with relationships, values and experiences, enabling pupils to enter the adult world as *confident, active participants*, little evidence of this was found by HMI in **Aspects of Secondary Education**. Subsequent DES and HMI reports began to highlight a continuing and growing concern shared by teachers, parents and employees that secondary education should relate the needs of individuals to the demands of society and to the worlds of work, training and unemployment. The Secretary of State identified these curriculum principles as breadth, relevance, differentiation and balance.

The teaching objectives and learning processes associated with Pre-Vocational Courses go a long way towards fulfilling these curriculum aims and reforms. Pupils respond to the looser structures and the more relaxed student-teacher relationships, thinking and acting like the young adults they are. This 'Pre-Vocational approach' should

not be restricted to the less able in the upper school for it is applicable to all ages and all abilities. Moreover, it is possible for schools to meet the aims of Pre-Vocational Education even if they do not provide Pre-Vocational Courses or are involved in TVEI Projects. It is likely that they are already being fulfilled in 'pockets' of activity around the school.

Existing subjects can help provide pupils with the skills, values and attitudes discussed earlier and all have the potential for experiential learning. In departments adopting 'Geography for the Young School Leaver', the traditional role of the teacher as a provider of knowledge was challenged. Pupils were expected to have opinions, express them and to participate in simulations and role play. It was a resource based course and utilised the community as a rich learning resource.

Some history can be characterised by open-ended methods of detection, recording and evaluation of evidence. It can employ other skills like these of empathy and provide for political and economic literacy.

Science can bring an expertise to topics of social significance, like the development of nuclear power and the testing of beauty products. The subject provides for informed decisions on the issues raised against a background of politics, technology, environmentalism and problem solving activities.

Mathematical topics can provide experiential approaches to learning, for group work, pupil planning, data-collection and decision making. In this context numerical skills are not seen as ends in themselves but as tools for understanding and coping with a variety of life situations. All subjects could give some of the responsibility of learning back to the pupils. They could encourage active participation in decision making since making choices and commitments in a real work context should develop from and be linked with similar activities in classrooms.

The aims of Pre-Vocational Education with its emphasis on personal relationships, values, ethics and understanding of oneself are often achieved in schools through programmes of personal and social development, including tutorial work. The objectives of such courses are derived from the social demands made on people at work and in the community. They facilitate a pupil's personal growth and development through active participation.

In addition to these structured activities many of the aims of Pre-Vocational Education are achieved via the 'Hidden Curriculum' which may well be a more potent force of social learning than planned classroom activities. Increasingly in schools Profiling has become a feature of learning and many others provide planned work experience.

In one sense therefore Pre-Vocational Education is a newly created area but in another it has existed for some time. Its newness lies principally in that it could provide a unifying curriculum structure. The key question remaining is how confident, competent and willing might staff be to adopt the curriculum approaches demanded of it.

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## The Coming Crisis at Fourteen Plus

Major changes in the structure of education come not from isolated political initiatives nor from revelations in research findings but rather from a consensus that 'something needs to be done'. Many an initiative founders, at school, LEA and national level, for want of a common belief in the need for change. Critical thresholds at which political action becomes possible and necessary are reached only after long foreshadowings apparent in hindsight to the historian and on occasions to the thinking contemporary.

The historical enactments of 1870, 1902 and 1944 are major examples; on only a slightly smaller scale so too is comprehensivisation in the post-war era. LEA developments interplay with every school's individual history of structural, organisational and curriculum change.

We are now fast approaching another great watershed in our educational history, a moment where powerful central and local interests combine to challenge a *status quo*. It is the *status quo* of schooling five to sixteen, historically powered and sustained by the idea that 'education is a good thing'. A developing consensus now has it that secondary schools have failed and are a lost cause. A collapse in confidence has occurred. It is now possible for senior educationists uncontroversially to say that education has not promoted social equality, it is not a generator of economic growth and the focus

of innovation has moved away from schools to programmes of work experience and vocational preparation. This assertion is based on the understanding that there has at no time been a clear agreement on what is meant by genuine secondary education for all. In thrall to an examination system serving only the sectional interests of a succeeding class-based minority, the secondary schools must be truncated or by-passed. Consideration is seriously being given to the idea of putting vocational and examination related education into separate categories from fourteen plus.

To retail such news to dedicated comprehensive school staffs is to sene the insult thus presented to teachers better aware of the problems in the last two years of secondary schools than their masters. Such staffs have been heavily engaged for years now in responding to the spirit of HMI's **Red Books**, seeking new ways to implement a common curriculum from eleven to sixteen. For such professionals the assertion that we must decide to vocationalise the education of those who will not pass examinations and to identify two halves of a school policy which are now educated together for separate treatment comes as a profound shock. It is a particular shock because of the strenuous efforts that have been made to find a generous and responsible version of 'vocationalism for all' not identifiable with a 'narrow training for some'. Such an extended 'vocationalism for all' is a proper response to the obsolescence of academic knowledge in a fast changing society and a recognition that more than academic knowledge is needed to cope with it. All pupils need practical skills, social responsibility and the understanding to participate fully in a complex culture. Curriculum content needs continuous reappraisal in the face of that demand. And the curriculum has been receiving precisely that sort of attention from countless teachers who are well aware that the examination system above all needs revision, witness teachers' increased participation in examination developments such as the Oxford Certificate of Educational Achievement and the various profiling initiatives. Now all this is judged a failure. The future for schools is envisaged as, at best, providing for all from eleven and for only academic sheep from fourteen. For the goats will be off to narrow vocationalism.

The message is clear that rationalising the FE, sixth form and youth training systems is politically impossible. This will demand in due course segregation at fourteen. A dual system is emerging and TVEI is no more than a contributory sideshow. Its lessons, which by all accounts are many, will be applied to the non-academic only, which is a monumental pity.

This divisive eventuality is of course not uncontested outside the schools. It can be no accident that the DES curriculum document, the *Structure and Content of the 5-16 Curriculum*, says little about vocational education. Paragraph 27 refers to the hope that TVEI will show how pre-vocational elements can enrich the curriculum in the fourth and fifth years. It also says that in these years it may be desirable to ensure that courses designed to foster narrow vocational skills, popular though these are with some pupils, do not displace courses of a more general character. Here we may discern an educational rearguard action against narrowing versions of the curriculum gaining

## Reviews

### To be a Pilgrim

**The Head's Tale** by Philip Toogood, Dialogue Publications, £4.00.

There has been a sorry list of brave attempts to match the school, needs of the students and the community in innovative ways resulting in either closure of schools or removal of the headteacher. Risinghill and Stewart Wilson at Sutton Centre spring to mind. The resignation of Philip Toogood from Madely Court School, Telford is yet another to add; and in all these situations the head has been at the receiving end of 'reactionary' forces within the local authority and of a powerful *minority* of the local community.

This book, written immediately after his resignation, is a personal account of Philip's progression along an educational and philosophical road from his days as an assistant master at Uppingham School to his headship at Madely Court. The regimes he experienced along that road brought him to an understanding of what really motivates young people to learn.

The chapter on his time at Wyndham School, Egremont examines the progressive nature of the '60s but yet which still worked with an academic/pastoral divide. While forming a useful foundation of experience on

#### Discussion (cont.)

strength outside the educational establishment, predominantly from the industrial and business lobby channelled through MSC.

Earthquakes opening fissures beneath our feet give advance warning. We should have picked up the assertion to be found in numerous LEA statutory statements that the Youth Training Scheme and the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education will in due course require a reappraisal of the 14-16 curriculum. Out of all these pressures there is emerging a new entity, the 14-18 curriculum, a four-year course with its own rationale.

It may now be too late to presee the ideal of an eleven-year common school programme. We may be forced to contemplate and then to live with a *de facto* lowering of the school leaving age. Sir Keith's high rise curriculum 5-16 will tumble in these perturbations. The new landscape will be one of ivory towers surrounded by acres of training workshops.

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which schools today can be built, this approach, he warns, can lead to a deficit model of human beings, 'We should create a lived experience at school — not bandage up the casualties of a disreputable academic pabulum'. He recalls how he was given room to develop his own department along an integrated approach which could break through the academic/pastoral divide and in which 'process' was as important as content and the content had to be 'owned' by the children.

In his account of his headship at Swavesey Village College 1970-77, in Cambridgeshire, he goes on to develop his theme of the importance of *process* in education, that comprehensive education must mean *community* education. He builds on the concepts of Henry Morris and celebrates the aspects of integration of school, community and the curriculum where it was made possible to occur.

From Swavesey he moved to Madely Court in Telford New Town from where he resigned in 1983. This school, he was led to believe, was built as a 'school-in-the-community', compared with the previous two which were a community school and community college respectively. The rest of the book looks at his years at Madely Court and describes the successes and failures, hopes and frustrations of putting into practice the notion of a 'community' comprehensive school with a curriculum of dialogue and personal interaction.

For the secondary teacher there is much of interest here on his 'mini-school organisation and curriculum design' and his management style. His chapter on the 'Management of Enabling' elaborates on five key variables which aid or hinder the collaborative process of curriculum — Thinking, Time, Teacher, Territory, Things.

Inevitably a key factor in the latter part of the book is the conflict with the local authority, the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate and its reception. This is a sad tale of misrepresentation, powerful forces in local authorities, and failure by the local authority to listen to children and parents. That a creative, sensitive head should resign before having any chance to fulfil his ideals is an indictment of our education service, when there are so many dull, non-thinking staff lacking commitment still teaching! His last chapter is a philosophical reflection with which I found it easy to identify.

This book was written with a concern for the children in our education system and a challenge that their future lies in the ability of those engaged in education to radically rethink their attitude to knowledge, its relevance, the process through which it is learned and the context in which it is learned, both institutional and environmental.

I'm sure there will be many who read the book who say of parts 'we've been there', many who will feel Philip Toogood is too idealistic in the real world of politics and education, and others who will be inspired by this highly subjective easily-read account of one man's journey into what is 'comprehensive' education.

Writing as an adult educator I am aware how often I noted in the book phrases and concepts that are commonplace in the adult education world but which still seem 'revolutionary' in a school. He himself says: 'The best teachers are, therefore, often learners. The teacher-learner relationship becomes a partnership . . . this is an unusual

idea about the role of a teacher in school'. The book was not written as a 'set book'; it employs a variety of styles and much that could be challenged but whatever your view of community education, this book offers a personal pilgrimage and perspective that adds to our understanding of the 'process' and 'politics' involved. We wish Philip Toogood success with Dialogue Publications.

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## Sutton Centre Saga

**The Challenges of Community Education: A Biography of Sutton Centre, 1970 to 1982** by Colin Fletcher. Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham (1983) pp.317, Main Report: £5.50; Footnotes and Appendices: £3.95.

This book is worth reading alongside **The Head's Tale**. For unlike Philip Toogood's book, which traced the development of one man's progression of thought as he moved from school to school, this book is an in-depth look at one purpose-built community comprehensive school and complex: the Sutton Centre in Sutton-in-Ashfield in Nottinghamshire.

The in-depth approach is made possible by the author being University Tutor and Researcher-in-residence for the formative years of the Centre's history, an 'observer on the inside'.

In discussing the merits of the book, it is difficult to give an account of the content without going into great detail to avoid missing out essential points. For this book is rich in content. Its narrative style uses a wide range of quotations, papers, plans, photographs and newspaper articles as supporting evidence, all of which indicates the lengths the author has gone to in his research. He certainly had his eyes and ears 'on alert' at all times.

In order to understand the development of the Sutton Centre, the early chapters trace the origins of this unpretentious mining community set alongside the M1.

The co-operation and conflict between the two providing authorities, the District Council and the County Council, are central to the issues raised alongside the life of the Centre (and are, I suspect, still alive today). The development stage of the project, covered in the next few chapters, brings this out, including the increased difficulties when the Urban District of Sutton became part of the bigger Ashfield District Council. What is remarkable in the development is the very public nature of it together with the accompanying consultation process that goes on. Even in its embryonic years, Sutton Centre makes good local press. The author points out another critical decision made at this stage — to have two systems: a head responsible to the County and a Recreation Manager responsible to the District. A major challenge indeed to Community Education!

The next three chapters trace the early years of the project and the crucial role of the

first headmaster Stewart Wilson, a committed 'community educator' who makes it clear that even the name of the site should indicate new directions in thinking: 'school' is out: 'centre' is in. A County Hall leaflet describing the centre in 1973 says there will be neither 'the time-wasting features of the traditional school timetable' nor 'any repressive system of rules and punishments'. Thus, says Colin Fletcher, even in a brief one-page outline, the 'old order' is provoked.

What follows is an account of the commitment, the enthusiasm and the innovative style of both head and staff which, in the early years at least, carries many along with it. The 'radical' approaches are too many to note in a short review; *three*, however, that are worthy of mention are the 12 discipline areas within the school curriculum each with its own director — Basic Skills, Communication and Resources, Creative Arts, Environmental Studies, European Studies, Home Management, Literature and Drama, Mathematics, Personal Relationships and Community Service, Science, Sports and Leisure, and Technical Studies; the eleventh session concept in which all staff are involved; and the controversial decision that *all* students are to study for CSE Mode 3s — leading on to A levels when ready.

The middle section of the book looks at the development of the other parts of the Centre alongside the school, while building work is going on all around and political control changes in the councils. A high level of co-operation is seen to exist, including the setting up of a co-ordinating committee to sort out minor conflicts before major ones arise. The 'eleventh session' is seen as a milestone in community involvement in learning for both staff and old and young alike, with 15,000 evening attendances by 1976. Throughout this period, the Governors and Director of Education are very supportive. The coming of the Recreation Centre — Ice Rink, Bowling Alley, Squash Courts, Main Hall — underlines the 'open' nature of the Centre: it is situated in the heart of the Sutton Shopping Centre.

The next part of the book looks at the period 1977 to 1980 when much changes. The Recreation Centre is dealt with as a separate issue — concentrating on whether or not it meets its own objectives. Early success is tempered by declining use in some areas and by the problems caused by its continued separate management. Other areas of the Centre begin to suffer from cuts, under-use and loss of key dynamic staff. Within the school sector specifically, more dramatic changes occur. Two schools are amalgamated with Sutton Centre. Staff already 'stretched' to full capacity are 'stretched' even further.

A significant comment opens Chapter 17: 'The crisis will be over 'O' levels. What's going to happen when he's told to do them?' The 'old order' is indeed provoked to crawl out of the woodwork. An inspection is called for; parents and students rally; the press have a field day — including, of course, *The Sun*! Stewart Wilson leaves for another headship — in Scotland, of a similar centre, but with overall control of the complex and *one* parent body. The school endures a drastic demoralisation.

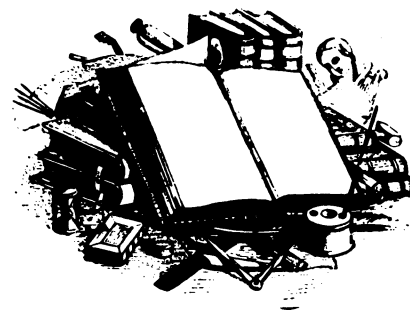
The final part of the book looks at the Centre and the community it serves from 1978 to the early 80s under the new head. This is a fascinating account of change and adaptation, with many of Stewart Wilson's

early successes being continued by Tom King but with major changes towards a more 'traditional' curriculum. The press are again reporting successes at the Centre.

You may identify with Stewart Wilson's aims; you may not like what you read; but we should at least be indebted to the chance offered to Colin Fletcher to live through such a development 'from the inside' and record it so fully so that we can learn too.

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## A Relaxation Tape?

**Stress in Teaching** by Jack Dunham. Croom Helm (1984) pp.176, £12.95 hardback.

In the recent *Sunday Times* 'Good Careers Guide', the stress rating given to teaching was 6.2 on a one-to-ten scale. Most teachers might consider 6.2 pretty inadequate; and, after reading Jack Dunham's book, I feel 9.9 would have been more appropriate, especially for the area he is concerned with — teaching in state schools. The book provides illuminating and informative reading for everyone involved in education, but perhaps especially for those 'indirect educationalists' whose policy-making — and seemingly endless barrage of 'helpful' advice — places such conflicting pressures on teachers.

For those directly engaged in the daily task of teaching the vast majority of the nation's children, this book provides a thorough and comprehensive examination of the nature of stress and of teachers' responses to it, given largely in their own words. This is not, however, a catalogue of teachers' moans. The author aims to give practical advice on increasing 'the individual's coping resources' in order to deal with stress, which he defines as: 'a process of behavioural, emotional, mental and physical reactions caused by prolonged, increasing or new pressures which are significantly greater than coping resources.' What Dunham calls the 'interactionist model' is the basis for the in-service training in stress-reduction skills which he has conducted for many years — and which forms the framework of this book.

If you caught a faint whiff of coterie-creating jargon there, rest assured: this book is lucidly written and mercifully free of the cryptography which obscures so much writing on education. Clarity is the hallmark of this well-produced and concise volume. In just 170 pages, there are tables and diagrams which are complementary to the text; a transcript of the author's own relaxation tape, developed for use in stress-reduction



workshops; and even a perceptive look at the role of the interview. Dunham uses experience gained from German schools as well as research concerned with areas other than teaching.

This last factor is important because, of course, many, if not most, of the problems of stress in teaching are not peculiar to teaching alone. Teachers are not unique in feeling unappreciated and isolated: the recent 'Counter Benefit' report on Scottish Social Security employees comes to mind as one example in this context. Nor are teachers alone part of a contracting service, with all the attendant frustrations which lack of promotional opportunities, deprivation of resources and inadequate facilities bring: doctors in the NHS, as well as scores of workers in a wide variety of industries, must have parallel problems. In the chapter on 'Pressures on the Top Management Team', the author reports a Deputy Head's comments:

'Some staff want a sounding-board for their problems; others request a critical appraisal of their career prospects; a few need to cry and more want to complain; a growing number are seeking advice on job applications and interviews; and some have major personal and marital problems.'

Where would this not apply to senior and middle management in any large, or average-size organisation?

One major problem which does emerge from these pages is the ambiguity which teachers at all levels feel concerning their precise role, both within the school itself, and within the education service as a whole. Lack of a clear role-definition is frequently given as a source of stress: 'the main pressures I experience (as a teacher) are a result of my dual role as fairy godmother and wicked witch.'

Surprisingly, there is no mention by teachers of the DES, politicians or university education departments. Is this because they are even more peripheral to the reality of school than we had thought? Yet the stream of reports, circulars and books does add pressure, and has, too, an uncanny knack of becoming received orthodoxy.

Allied to this, a major source of stress seems to be the amount and rapidity of change; the complexity of organisations forced on teachers by the constant demands to innovate, extend, develop — often in a myriad of unco-ordinated directions — at the behest of theoreticians more concerned with ideology than with efficiency or commonsense.

'We felt that when this school opened, we were thrown into far too much change. There were too many ideas that we were trying to operate all at the same time, and this gave us a great deal of insecurity. We lacked stability.'

The need for stability is recognised by the author:

'The changes in primary and secondary schools have not been properly assimilated, and a moratorium of five years to give teachers the opportunity to come to terms with recent and current innovations would seem to be a reasonable conclusion.'

Dunham also admits that this is unlikely in the face of changes already in the pipeline. Yet the time is long overdue for a much clearer definition of roles for *all* teachers. Allowing more and more expectations to be

heaped on teachers, like packages on a donkey, will not lead to greater rewards but to greater recriminations when the donkey fails to deliver the goods: it is usually the donkey who gets shot.

From the personal responses quoted, it is clear that Jack Dunham's own programme has helped many teachers; even to just articulate the problem is a relief:

'Stress is caused because I am unable to ask for extra support because if I did I would be assessed as a weak teacher by the rest of the staff.'

But this attitude, so deeply entrenched, of teachers towards one another, would seem to create enormous obstacles to the school-based staff-development and social support groups which the book recommends. Attendance at groups away from one's own school would clearly offer a better chance of success for individuals; but it does leave the basic stress conditions within the work-situation unchanged. Teachers need to be more compassionate towards each other; they also need more time. Where in the crowded days, reflected frequently in these pages, is there adequate time to organise and attend school-based support groups? Will this not merely intensify stress for the over-stretched individual? Remember, this is a profession which does not even give its members, as of right, regular in-service training.

One group which is not considered here but which is surely vitally important to the success of the whole organisation, are the parents. Parents are the customers and yet they are almost invisible in education literature, and, it would seem, wholly absent from the minds of those employed in the service. The only reference to parents in this book is as an additional cause of stress. This is a pity because gaining the understanding and support of parents would remove much of the stress caused by bureaucratic policy-making, both local and national. Parents would gain greater understanding of the teacher's role in a modern school from this book; and it is a compliment to Jack Dunham to say that most parents would be able to understand it too.

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## Brief Notices

1) Jonathan Croall's much-acclaimed biography of A.S. Neill, **Neill of Summerhill: The Permanent Rebel**, first published in 1983, is now available as an Ark Paperback at £3.95. It was reviewed in *Forum* Vol.26, No.2 by the writer and broadcaster Edward Blishen who called it a 'splendid biography of a man whose greatness was mysteriously unlike any other kind of greatness one can think of . . .'

2) All those concerned with the development of children's writing abilities will find much of value and interest in: **Voices On The Page: The Development of Children's Writing Abilities 5-11**, edited by Liz Thomson, with contributions from the members of Longmore Teachers' Centre Writing Research Group. This stimulating book, published in December 1984, records the findings and observations of a group of primary teachers who have been meeting regularly at Longmore Teachers' Centre, Hertford, since February 1981. It arose out of their reactions to a draft discussion document on children's writing produced by the County Working Group on Literacy in October 1980. The main section of the book 'Teachers, Children & Writing' is concerned with sharing examples of children's writing development. The material is organised chronologically with each set of examples prefaced by the individual teacher's view of their role in the writing process.

Copies of this book can be obtained price £2.00 each plus 50p per copy postage & packing from: Longmore Teachers' Centre, Churchfields, Hertford SG13 8AF.

3) **The Tightening Grip: Growth of Central Control of the School Curriculum** by Denis Lawton is part of the on-going debate about the control of education in England and Wales. Published in 1984 as Bedford Way Paper No.21 by the University of London Institute of Education (price £1.50), it is, in fact, a revised version of the 1983 William Walker Lecture given by Professor Lawton to the British Educational Management and Administration Society. That was, itself, a follow-up to Professor Lawton's 1978 lecture on the politics of the curriculum which was called 'The End of the "Secret Garden"?' and which was expanded into a book, **The Politics of the School Curriculum**, published by Routledge and Kegan Paul in 1980. Professor Lawton follows the machinations of the DES with the same fascination and enthusiasm that experts on Soviet Russia display in observing and interpreting the goings-on in the Kremlin.

In this present pamphlet, Professor Lawton suggests that it is wrong to think of the DES as a monolithic body. Rather, it should be seen as comprising at least *three* groups with somewhat different ideologies: the politicians (ministers, political advisers, etc.); the bureaucrats (DES officials); and the professionals (HMI). In a postscript on Sir Keith Joseph's Sheffield Speech of January 1984 — which is described as 'a superb example of an ideological patchwork quilt' — the author argues that 'the new centralism will only be acceptable if it is based on sound educational principles; bureaucratic or political dogma will not do'.

CLYDE CHITTY

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